The Political History from the Ninth to the Seventeenth Dynasties

Dieter Kessler

The Old Kingdom came to an end when a member of the house of Khety of Herakleopolis took over the Memphite throne under circumstances that are as yet unknown. The usual designation for the period to follow, the "First Intermediate Period," refers to a short phase of conflicts between the south and the north for dominance of the country. The new dynasty of the Herakleopolitans (Ninth/Tenth Dynasties) was only recognized from Lower Egypt to the area south of Asiut. Thebes was hostile from the outset. There the ruler of the city had overcome his opponents in the south. With the help of Nubian mercenaries and during the course of extended fighting, the Thebans succeeded in overpowering the Middle Egyptian blockade at Asiut. Under the leadership of Mentuhotep II (2046–1995 BC), the Thebans finally seized the Memphite throne as well, founding the Eleventh Dynasty. Mentuhotep was justified in calling himself "the unifier of the two lands." From a historical point of view, the reunification of the realm marks the beginning of the so-called Middle Kingdom.

The Position of the King in the Middle Kingdom

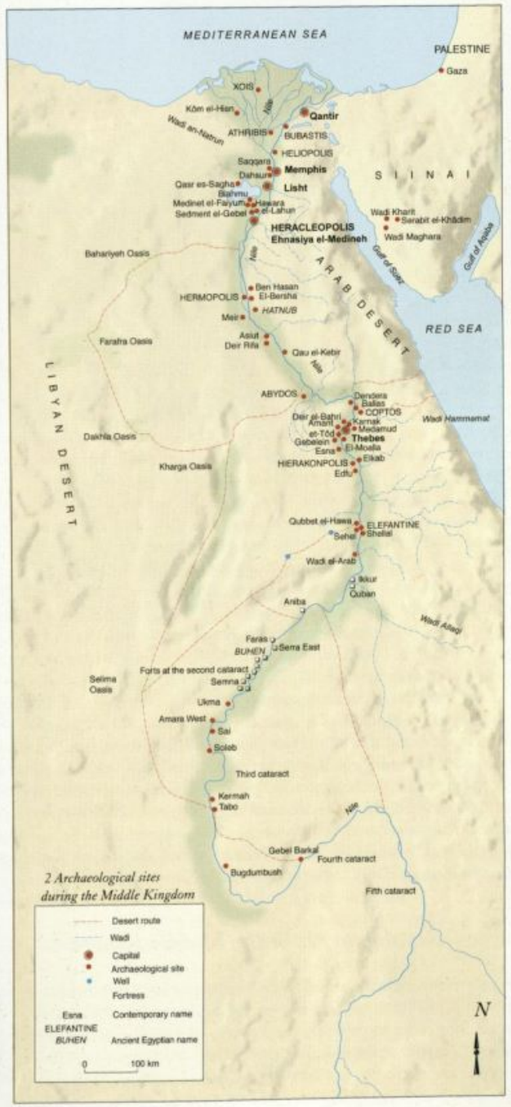
Since the Old Kingdom, belief in the absolute power of the king in a theological sense had been lost. The history of the following period is characterized by the antagonism between the king and powerful families who assert their influence in the provinces. With the help of literature and of theology, an attempt is made to strengthen the position of the king. The literary form of the "royal novel" serves as both justification and propaganda. The origin of the royal birth legend, declaring the king to be the son of god, dates from the Twelfth Dynasty.

Just as in earlier periods, the true person of the pharaoh during the Middle Kingdom also remains largely a mystery. The hymn to the king portrays the ruler as the ideal of an omnipotent father figure, whose education included training in warfare and hunting. But any intimate details about impulsive acts, of intrigues, and even murder, which surely also occurred at court during the Middle Kingdom, have generally not survived. A spectacular exception is the assassination of Amenemhat I.

Foreign Policy during the Middle Kingdom

The pharaoh's interests at this period regarding the Syro-Palestinian area concentrated primarily on the maintenance of trade routes. The Herakleopolitans had already strengthened the royal military presence at Qantir at the eastern arm of the Delta. Here began an important

1 Standing figure of Mentuhotep II
Western Thebes, Deir el-Bahari; Eleventh Dynasty, ca. 2000 BC; sandstone; H. 183 cm; New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 26.3.29.
The unifier of the kingdom Mentuhotep II faced the dual tasks of securing political control and reorganizing religious affairs. The Theban gods Montu and Amun became national deities and were included in the great Theban line of ancestors.



2 Archaeological sites during the Middle Kingdom

3 Head from a sphinx of Sesostris I
Karnak; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1950 BC; granite; H. 38 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 38228 (CG 42007).
Upon his accession, Sesostris I first had to quell internal unrest. The king consolidated his rule and then began an extensive building program, particularly in Karnak where the so-called "White Chapel" has been preserved.

trade and military route toward Gaza. The so-called Walls of the Ruler, a blockade at the eastern border, was intended to prevent the immigration of bedouin tribes with whom sporadic conflicts took place at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom. Numerous Egyptian representatives spent time at the courts of the smaller city-states of the Near East. With their help, Egypt gained precise knowledge about the politics of their particular rulers. Artifacts of Egyptian products in Syria (Byblos, Qatna, Ebla) and Palestine (Hazor) as well as artifacts of Mesopotamian and Cretan products in Egypt (et-Tôd) have been identified from this period and attest to extensive long-distance trade contacts.

Already in the Eleventh Dynasty trade was also resumed with Punt (today in Somalia or Eritrea). In Sinai the turquoise mines were reopened. The Eastern Desert too became an area of economic activity. During the Eleventh Dynasty, amethyst (Wadi el-Hudi) and graywacke (Wadi Hammamat) were mined there and, during the Twelfth Dynasty (Gebel Zeit), galena as well. In the west, Wadi Natrun, whose inhabitants transported their own products and transit trade goods into the Nile Valley, was controlled from a fortress since the reign of Amenemhat I.

The Egyptians pursued control of Nubia step by step through military interventions. In the past, the princes there had placed their archers at the disposal of the Theban ruler. After the unification of the realm under Mentuhotep II, the lower Nubian area once again came under Egyptian influence as a supplier of raw materials. During the Twelfth Dynasty the Egyptians used large fortresses in the area of the third cataract to counter the threat of the kingdom of Kerma, which had prospered through trade with central Africa, and begun to expand from the Dongola Basin to both the south and the north.

Internal Developments in the Middle Kingdom

The victorious dynasty developed Thebes as its capital. Just at the moment of the new unification of the realm under Mentuhotep II, however, the provincial rulers, the so-called nomarchs, gained strength, to judge from the authoritarian tone of their tomb inscriptions. This is a possible indication that Mentuhotep II had to show them his gratitude in exchange for being accepted as king in Memphis. When the

4 Seated statue of Sesostris III
Hierakonpolis; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1860 BC; granodiorite; H. 54.5 cm, D. 35 cm, W. 19 cm; New York, The Brooklyn Museum, 52.1.
This statue belongs to the cult of Sesostris's rejuvenation and shows him at his preferred age, accompanying the renewal ritual at the *sed* festival. It is the cult image of a dynamic pharaoh striving for a centralized state. The officials who realized the significance of the image type adopted a similar appearance.

vizier Amenemhat overthrew the last ruler of the Theban dynasty, Mentuhotep IV, and seized the throne as the founder of a new dynasty, it also seems that not all governors simply went along with the new developments. Amenemhat I was only able to assert himself through internal struggles. He departed from the politics of his predecessors and deliberately chose to follow the traditions of the north. Near el-Lisht, south of Cairo, he built his new residential city, Itj-tawy, "Conqueror of the Two Lands," and a classical pyramid complex. As we can read in the "Teachings of Amenemhat," which was commissioned by his son Sesostris I and handed down for generations, Amenemhat I was murdered in his sleep as the result of a harem conspiracy. This unprecedented event led to chaos within both the royal family and the administration. The first task for the new pharaoh was therefore to consolidate territorial control. Structures were reorganized; the territorial borders were drawn anew. Thus the independent governors gradually became governors of the king.

Sesostris III continued the process of centralization and brought the sons of leading families to the royal court. Administrative power was concentrated at the royal residence, represented in particular by two viziers. The provinces' progressive loss of importance is reflected in the archeological discovery that these families no longer chose to build their tombs there. The most significant achievement of Amenemhat II was the colonizing of the Faiyum oasis, where he eventually built his pyramid. New land for the kingdom was gained through the organizing of a water supply to that area.

The short reigns of the last kings of the Twelfth Dynasty and those of the Thirteenth Dynasty in the approximately eighty years that followed suggest that there were violent conflicts over control of Egypt. Nevertheless, the administration remained for the most part intact, as is shown by preserved books of accounts. Neferhotep I, one of the last pharaohs of the Thirteenth Dynasty, was still powerful enough to maintain contacts with the ruler of Byblos. Shortly thereafter, however, Egypt seems to have dissolved into smaller territories for good.

5 Ka statue of King Hor in a shrine
Dahshur; Thirteenth Dynasty, ca. 1750 BC; wood, bronze, quartz; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 30948 (CG 259).
This once-painted cult statue of an otherwise little-known Memphite king comes from a statue shrine in his tomb next to the brick pyramid of Amenemhat III in Dahshur.

6 Praying figure of Amenemhat III
Karnak; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1820 BC; black granodiorite; H. 110 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 36928 (CG 42014).
The king, who continued the centralizing policies of his predecessor, also adopted his predecessor's age type. Several granite statues of the ruler are known from Karnak.

The Hyksos

Foreigners who had settled in Egypt were employed in great numbers in the military, in trade, and in craftmanship already toward the end of the Twelfth Dynasty. At that time there was a second wave of immigration of settlers from southern Palestine and Syria as a result of violent upheavals there. From an archeological point of view, their presence in the area is proved by the singularity of their burial customs (donkeys' graves) as well as through artifacts dating from this period, among them pottery from Cyprus. The latter indicates the presence of groups of foreign merchants pursuing long-distance Mediterranean trade. A local ruler, Nehesi, Egyptian for "the Nubian," was finally able to gain independence and control a small area in the Delta along the trade route to southern Palestine with Avaris as its center. Today, such minor rulers are considered to belong to a period once thought to be fictitious, the Fourteenth Dynasty.

It seems as if a ruler from this group finally gained control of the Memphite throne. In a formal, historical sense this marks the end of the Middle Kingdom and the beginning of the so-called Second Intermediate Period. Later tradition grouped the foreign pharaohs under their Egyptian title "Rulers of the Foreign Lands" (Egyptian: Hekakhasut; Greek: Hyksos).

The following six so-called great Hyksos rulers of the Fifteenth Dynasty, with their capital in Avaris, were recognized as Egyptian pharaohs. They pursued a balance of interests with the regions farther to the south, including Thebes where the last descendants of the Memphite rulers had retreated. The Hyksos' Semitic-Egyptian double names were intended to correspond to both groups of peoples. Their dominance was supported by a chain of settlements of alien populations in the eastern Delta and as far as southern Palestine, who profited from the trade. Thus vessels and scarabs bearing the names of Hyksos rulers have been found throughout the Mediterranean region.

Middle and Upper Egypt were divided into various spheres of power. In Thebes, minor rulers who seceded and assumed the ruling title are known as the Seventeenth Dynasty. In Middle Egypt and in the town of Gebelein, south of Thebes, the local rulers remained loyal to the Hyksos kings. Thebes began to arm itself in secret.

Seqenenre (ca. 1570 BC) initiated conflict with the Hyksos vassals but was killed in battle. His son Kamose eventually penetrated with his fleet as far as Avaris but was forced to turn back at the fortified walls of the citadel. It was only his brother and successor Ahmose, founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty, who about 1550 BC was able to expel the Hyksos rulers and reunite Egypt under the leadership of Thebes. This event is equated with the beginning of the New Kingdom.

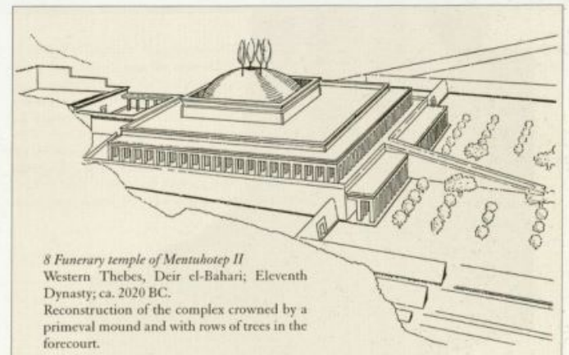
The Tombs of the Pharaohs – Between Tradition and Innovation

Rainer Stadelmann

The long reign of Pepi II toward the end of the Sixth Dynasty turned out to be a "catastrophe" for Egypt. After the completion of his impressive pyramid complex dating from, at the latest, the first anniversary in the thirtieth year of his reign, nothing noteworthy happened for over thirty or even sixty years. Sculptors and painters were still partially engaged in working on private tombs, so in the artistic sphere the tradition of the royal cemeteries continued without interruption. The well-trained workcrews, stonecutters, masons, transporters, and engineers proceeded for decades without a state commission, thus the training of the next generation was also neglected and the organization forgotten. Projects for large pyramid complexes could therefore no longer be undertaken by the kings of the Herakleopolitan era in the area around Memphis. The few, only nominally known tomb complexes were surely small and possibly never completed.

First steps toward the construction of a monumental king's tomb of a completely different form were evident at Thebes in Upper Egypt, where the renewed unification of the realm originated. The minor kings or rulers of the Eleventh Dynasty in that area were buried in cliff-side tombs with large outer courts. The unifier of the kingdom, Mentuhotep II, gave this tomb type its monumental effect by choosing the wide valley of Deir el-Bahari opposite modern Luxor as a sort of courtyard for his tomb. This took the form of a terraced temple, which was expanded several times during his long reign, and included not a burial pyramid, but more likely a stylized primeval mound about 11 m high surrounded by an elevated portico with three rows of columns. Adjoining this to the west began the funerary temple proper, a large court with a portico, and a hypostyle hall with several naves including a sanctuary for the deified king and the god Amun.

The tomb itself is sunk fully 150 m into the mountainside and consists of a granite chamber with an alabaster shrine. During an early building phase, six shrines for princesses or priestesses of Hathor were constructed whose walls and coffins show scenes from the princesses' lives and of their function as priestesses with reliefs in the bold style of Upper Egypt. From the outer court a deep shaft leads under the bulk of the central structure where an empty coffin and the famous, black-painted, seated statue of Mentuhotep stood in a roughly hewn chamber. A long, wide ramp used for processions led from the floodplain to the outer court with its rows of seated statues of the king under sycamores and tamarisks. At the southern and northern rims of the valley, the high officials of the late Eleventh Dynasty were permitted to build their sepulchres, splendid corridor tombs with courts sloping upward.

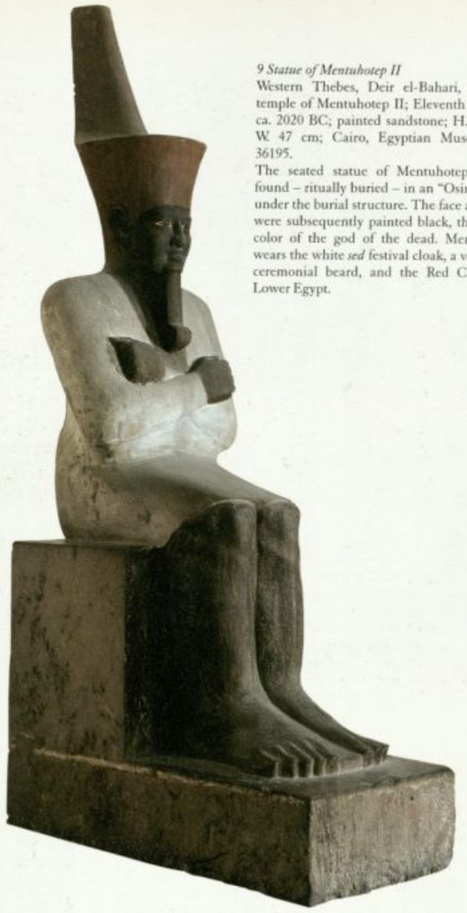


8 Funerary temple of Mentuhotep II
Western Thebes, Deir el-Bahari; Eleventh Dynasty; ca. 2020 BC.
Reconstruction of the complex crowned by a primeval mound and with rows of trees in the forecourt.

The kings of the Twelfth Dynasty left Thebes in order to establish the residence Itj-tawi, "Conqueror of the Two Lands," in the north near modern el-Lisht. There they resumed the traditions of pyramidal tombs, although with substantial construction changes. During the late Old Kingdom, a more or less standard measurement for pyramids of approximately 65–75 m (= 125–150 ancient Egyptian cubits) base length to a height of approximately 50 m (= 100 cubits) had become customary. Experience had taught that with these measurements a solid exterior facing would be able to hold even a loosely layered inner wall structure for a long time, which doubtless facilitated construction and shortened building time.

This knowledge is presumed to have still existed when Amenemhat I built his pyramid at el-Lisht since his tomb exhibits both these

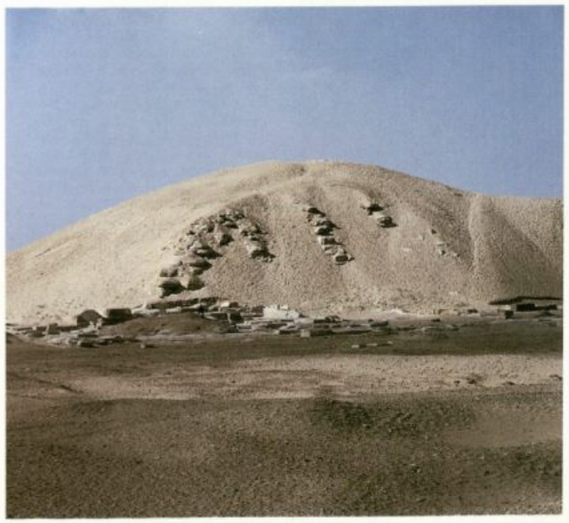
7 Tomb complex of Mentuhotep II
Western Thebes, Deir el-Bahari; Eleventh Dynasty, ca. 2020 BC.
The tomb of the unifier of the kingdom, Mentuhotep of Thebes, is no longer a pyramid complex but a terraced temple with wide, tree-planted outer courts, porticoes, and a massive central structure ringed with ambulatories and crowned, not with a pyramid, but with a primeval mound. This important complex was rebuilt and extended several times before receiving its final form. The wide pit in the courtyard paving to be seen in the center of the picture marks the entrance to the passage that leads to the king's burial chamber. But even this hidden position could not defend the royal burial from being plundered by the grave robbers of antiquity.



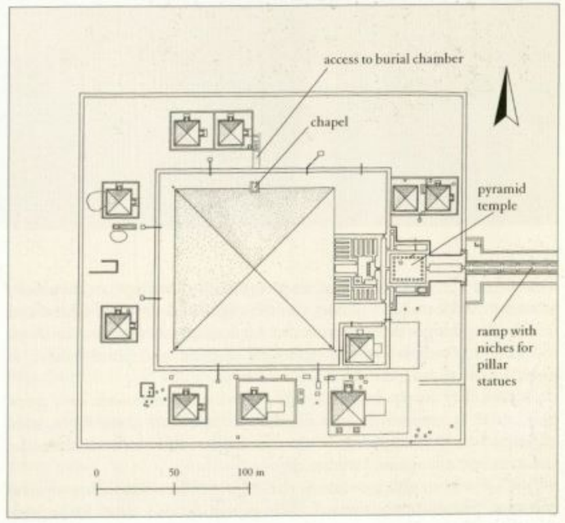
9 Statue of Mentuhotep II
Western Thebes, Deir el-Bahari, funerary temple of Mentuhotep II; Eleventh Dynasty, ca. 2020 BC; painted sandstone; H. 138 cm, W. 47 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 36195.
The seated statue of Mentuhotep II was found – ritually buried – in an "Osiris tomb" under the burial structure. The face and body were subsequently painted black, that is the color of the god of the dead. Mentuhotep wears the white *sed* festival cloak, a very large ceremonial beard, and the Red Crown of Lower Egypt.

10 (below)King Mentuhotep II
Western Thebes, Deir el-Bahari, funerary temple of Mentuhotep II; Eleventh Dynasty, ca. 2020 BC; painted limestone; H. 38 cm, L. 98 cm; New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1907, 07.230.2.
Among the numerous relief fragments discovered in the badly damaged funerary temple during excavation work in 1903–1907 by the Egypt Exploration Fund, the New York example is an important piece due to its size and its exceptionally well-preserved painting. The block originally belonged to a representation on the southern exterior wall of the sanctuary. It shows the king in adoration before Amun-Min (not pictured) while he himself is being followed by the goddess Hathor (right). Mentuhotep II wears the White Crown of Upper Egypt, a broad collar, and a garment with straps knotted over his shoulder. The king's divine nature is emphasized by a long ceremonial beard slightly rolled up at the end.

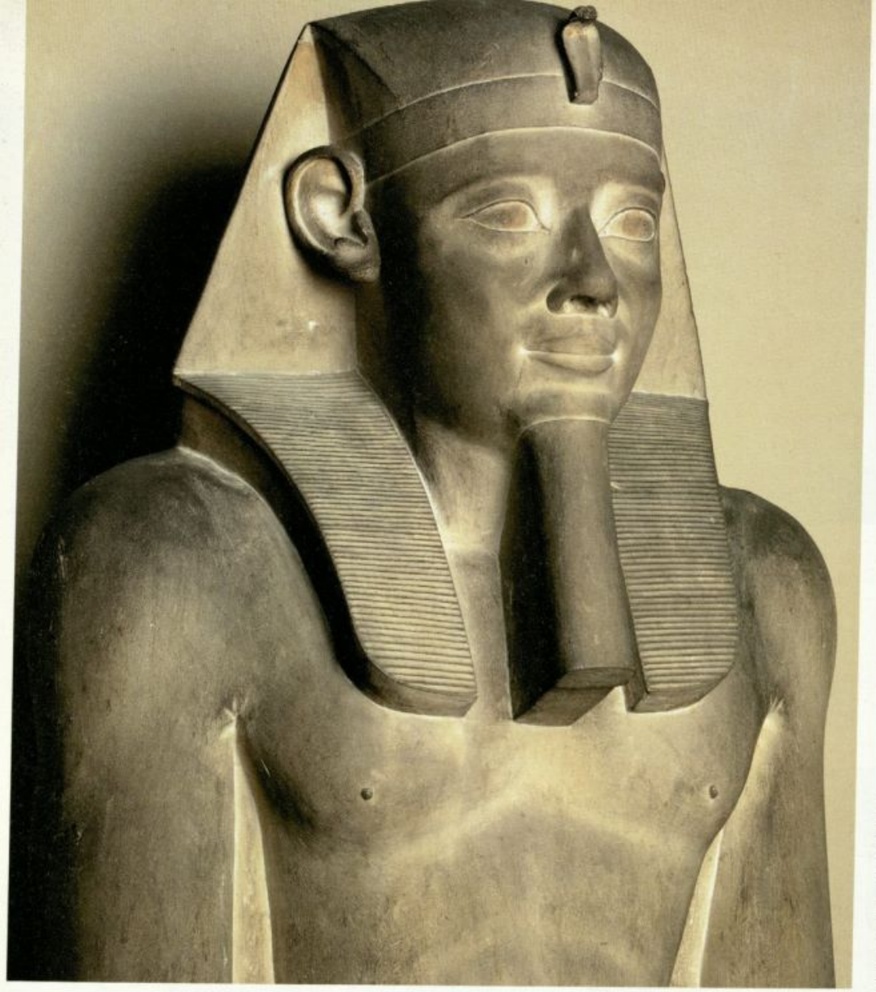
11 Temple relief of Amenemhat I
el-Lisht, funerary temple of Amenemhat I; Twelfth Dynasty, ca.1960 BC; painted limestone; L. 190 cm, H. 35 cm; New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 08.200.5.
The first two rulers of the Twelfth Dynasty, Amenemhat I and Sesostris I, once again built their pyramids and accompanying cult complexes in the area around Memphis, near the village of el-Lisht. In the very badly damaged funerary temple of Amenemhat I the American excavators from the Metropolitan Museum (1906–1922) could find only a few blocks of the original wall decoration. The upper half of a lintel shown here has attracted little attention thus far – surprisingly enough – although the piece with its well-preserved painted decoration must be considered one of the best examples of relief sculpture under Amenemhat I. In the center of the image, the ruler stands wearing a curled wig with the uraeus serpent, ceremonial beard, and broad collar. As symbols of his power he holds a flail and a so-called *mekes* symbol in his hands. He is flanked by the falcon-headed god Horus (left), and the necropolis and embalming god Anubis (right); both gods hand him an ankh. The scene is completed by the two goddesses of the crowns and lands of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nekhbet (left) and Uto (right) who enter from both sides and, because of their identical appearance, can be differentiated only by the identifying inscription.



12 Pyramid of Sesostris I
el-Lisht; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1930 BC.
The kings of the Twelfth Dynasty resided once again near the old capital of Memphis and continued to construct pyramids like those of their Old Kingdom predecessors. Sesostris I focused for the most part on the example of Sixth Dynasty pyramid complexes. However, with a star-shaped skeletal structure of limestone, his master builders discovered new construction techniques.



13 Plan of the pyramid complex of Sesostris I
el-Lisht; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1930 BC.
Around the royal pyramid with its funerary temple stand the small cult pyramids and nine pyramids of queens. The king's structure bore the name"Sesostris overviews the two countries" and was fully surrounded by an inner limestone wall displaying niche decorations.



14 Seated figure of Sesostris I (detail)
el-Lisht, pyramid complex; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1930 BC; limestone; H. 200 cm, W. 58.4 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 31139.
Ten of these unfinished statues were found in a pit in the area around the temple – apparently buried according to ritual. They are portraits of a perpetually youthful ruler that must have been destined for display in the offering court. Perhaps this figure type no longer corresponded to Sesostris I's taste, which would explain why they were buried.

measurements and the building method. During construction, however, Amenemhat's master builders broke all rules of ethics and ignored the king's own instructions by stealing their materials from the funerary temples of the pyramids at Giza and possibly also at Saqqara and reusing them as core masonry.

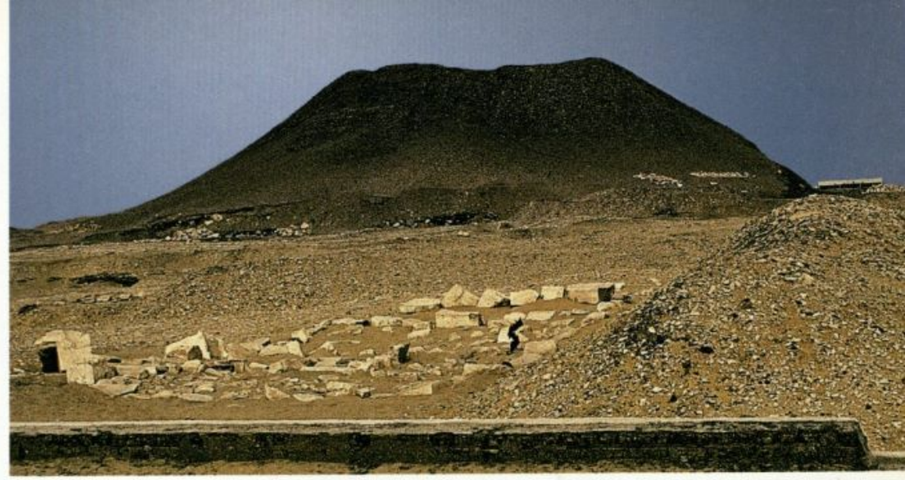
This was surely not an act in pious commemoration of a great past, as it is sometimes explained, but deliberate theft by a state organization that apparently was no longer able to undertake the construction of large new pyramids.

This was to change during the reign of Amenemhat's powerful son and successor, Sesostris I. His pyramid, also at el-Lisht, was already somewhat larger and built with a new technique. A star-shaped skeleton supports the basic masonry, which as before consists of unworked stones. A strong facing made of solidly joined, fine limestone blocks once gave these structures the necessary solidity. It was only the removal of stones during the medieval Arabic period that caused the modern-day erosion of these pyramids.

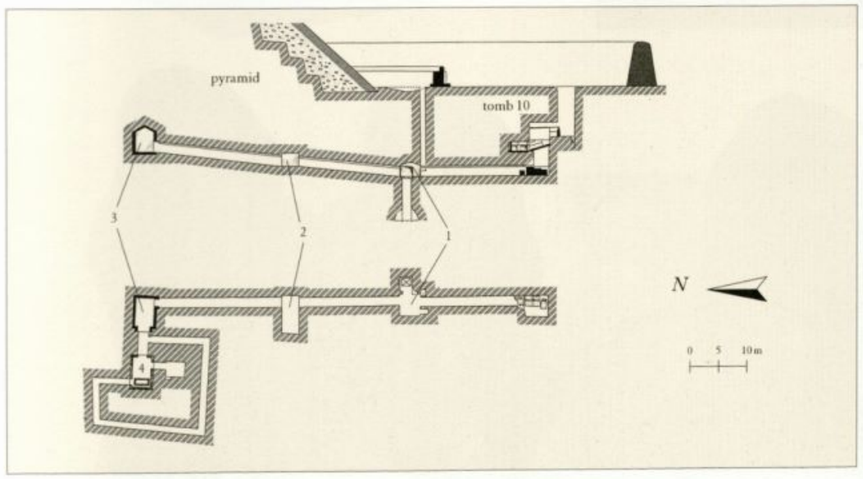
The burial corridor was built of granite blocks. Today it ends below the water table, as does the burial corridor in the pyramid of Amenemhat I. Perhaps the burial chamber lay at the bottom of a deep shaft. The pyramid temple is a simplified copy of corresponding late Old Kingdom structures. The ramp differs from its precursors in the addition of a row of six engaged statues at its end and on each side. These may have replaced seated statues of Sesostris that were probably already carefully buried during the time of construction.

The inner pyramid complex was enclosed by a tall limestone wall, which was decorated both inside and outside with one hundred 5-meter high representations of the Horus name of Sesostris I in high relief. The relief fragments from the mortuary cult complex show the image of a self-assured, authoritative ruler – an image that is impressively confirmed by his statues and inscriptions. The queens and princesses were buried in nine smaller pyramids in the outer court of the larger pyramid.

The changes in the corridor and chamber system inside the pyramid on the one hand and in the outer pyramid complex on the



15 Pyramid of Sesostris III
Dahshur; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1860 BC.
This pyramid of Sesostris III – the earliest example of a pyramid constructed completely of mudbrick but faced with limestone – stands in an extensive pyramid complex that was first to revive the north–south orientation similar to that of Djoser. A hidden entrance leads to the barrel-vaulted burial chamber containing a splendid granite sarcophagus and decorated with niches. Around the pyramid lay the graves of twelve princesses buried with rich arrays of jewelry.



16 Passageway and burial chamber system of the pyramid of Sesostris II: plan
El-Lahun; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1875 BC.
The royal tomb lies not under the middle of the pyramid but southeast of it in the heart of the cliff. The shafts and corridors leading to the burial chamber make up a real labyrinth of false burial chambers, shafts, and forking corridors. The beginning of the burial corridor, hidden 16 m below the floor slab of the queen's tomb Number 10, led over a horizontal passageway to a barrel-vaulted hall (1) in front of which a vertical shaft, the entrance shaft proper, opened. From the hall a second shaft sinks deep down into the cliff; its end lies under the water table and can no longer be reached. From the northeast corner of the hall, the horizontal corridor climbs gently (6°46') to a passage chamber (2), from there again to the antechamber (3) from which one could reach the coffin chamber directly to the west or, turning south, by walking around the coffin chamber through a passageway with four turns and finally approaching from the north.

other shed light on the transformation of the world view and the concept of the royal afterlife. The experience of the plundering of royal tombs during turbulent periods inspired the master builders of the Middle Kingdom to devise ever more complicated safety measures. Portcullis stones were clearly no longer sufficient by themselves. During the course of the Twelfth Dynasty the entrances, which were traditionally set in the middle of the pyramid's north face, were placed in less obvious positions or in deep shafts. The entrance to Sesostris II's tomb at Illahun leads from the shaft of a tomb for queens outward and under the pyramid. Some corridors terminate in dead ends. The real burial corridors lead further at a higher level, turning corners to end finally in the royal burial chamber that is, for the most part, faced in granite. The coffin chambers are protected by massive sealing slabs and arches. The sarcophagi are in all cases made of costly red granite with niche decorations. The antechambers are developed into halls that would have served the maneuvering of the granite blocks but in which we can recognize the tribunal chamber of Osiris. The symbolism of the "Osiris tomb" was also clearly suggested by the planting of thick clusters of trees around the pyramid complex. The belief in an afterlife in Osiris's underworld, where the king and Osiris become one, now replaced to a large extent the heavenly afterlife with the sun god.

Through the worship of Osiris during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties, this god's cult site of Abydos became a holy city. The "Osiris tomb" was discovered in the First Dynasty royal cemetery in Umm el-Gaab, doubtless originally the tomb of a king of that time.

As a result, kings and private individuals of every class wanted to have actual tombs, symbolic tombs (cenotaphs), or stelae on the processional street at Abydos leading past the spot in order to identify themselves with Osiris. Sesostris III built a gigantic cliff corridor tomb at Abydos that contained three successive false tombs and an "Osiris tomb," the latter remaining incomplete. In its technique and religious concepts, this cliff tomb is a model for later royal tombs of the New Kingdom. Several of Sesostris III's successors in the Thirteenth Dynasty followed his example of constructing a symbolic tomb at Abydos. Perhaps the kings are even buried in these funerary structures.

19 Pyramid of Amenemhat III
Hawara; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1820 BC.
This limestone-faced brick pyramid stood in such an extensive complex of chapels and courts that the Greeks compared it with the labyrinth of Knossos. Hardly anything remains of the splendid decoration of columns, sculptures, and reliefs.

17/18 Double figure of Amenemhat III as god of the Nile
Tanis, Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1820 BC; granodiorite; H. 160 cm, W. 100 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 18221 (CG 392).
Like other sculptures in the round of Middle Kingdom kings, the so-called fish-offering statue was removed to Tanis in the eastern Delta during the Twenty-first Dynasty where it was discovered during excavations in 1861. Judging from the characteristic facial features, the subject can unequivocally be indentifed as Amenemhat III, the last great ruler of the Twelfth Dynasty. The inscriptions between the figures, which mention Psusennes I, indicate that the monument was usurped. We can suppose with some certainty that the original location at the time of Amenemhat III was the funerary temple at the king's pyramid at Hawara, even if we cannot fully exclude the possibility of a provenance from the Sobek shrine in Shedit, the old capital of the Faiyum. The hairstyle of the two figures is particularly striking with thick braids and shield-shaped beards. Possibly Amenemhat III had adopted an archetype of the Nile god Hapi from the Predynastic period, whom the ruler embodies here; the numerous offerings support this interpretation – fish, poultry, and hanging lotus blossoms, which he may have added as guarantor of the fertility of the land. The perfect symmetry of the double statues, which supercedes all conventions, reflects the dualism of Upper and Lower Egypt.

20 Pyramidion of Amenemhat III
Dahshur; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1840 BC; granite; H. 131 cm, base: 187 x 187.5 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 35133 (35745).
The pyramidion of black granite was decorated with the king's pair of eyes with which he observes the journey of the sun in the sun barques, which are also pictured on the pyramidion.

21 "Black" brick pyramid of Amenemhat III
Dahshur; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1840 BC.
This pyramid has a core of brick and a limestone facing. The system of corridors and chambers is labyrinthine, designed with numerous antechambers and side rooms. The pyramid showed serious signs of settling, however, even prior to its completion. It was therefore used only for the burial of queens and princesses in secondary corridors and chambers. Tombs for princesses were constructed in the north of the pyramid. In one of these shafts, the intact tomb of the minor King Hor of the Thirteenth Dynasty was found.

22 Pectoral of the princess Mereret
Dahshur, tomb of Mereret; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1840 BC; gold, carnelian, lapis lazuli, and faience; H. 7.9 cm, W. 10.5 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 30875.
While examining the pyramid complex of Sesostris III in 1894, the French excavator J. de Morgan came upon the tomb of the princess Mereret. As the daughter of Sesostris III and the sister of Amenemhat III, she possessed a lavish burial treasure that included this pectoral. It was produced in openwork technique of gold sheet with the picture contours soldered on as a base. The resulting cells were then filled with inlays cut to size. Under the symbol of the Nekhbet vulture, the motif is developed reflecting chapel architecture, symmetrical to an axis. On each side, Amenemhat III strides forward and with the scimitar-mace performs the "smiting of the foes," seizing each foe by the hair. The cartouches bear the throne name of the ruler while in the middle the title reads, "the perfect god, lord of the Two Lands and of all foreign lands who slays the Asiatics." On the reverse side, the image is repeated in chiseled technique.

23 Pectoral of Sit-Hathor-yunet
el-Lahun, tomb of Sit-Hathor-yunet, Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1870 BC; gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise, carnelian, and garnet; H. 8.2 cm; New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Henry Walter and Rogers Fund, 1916, 16.1.3.
In February 1914, workers digging for the English excavator W. M. Flinders Petrie at the pyramid of Sesostris II at el-Lahun chanced upon a shaft tomb that had already been plundered in ancient times. Careful examination of the chamber led to the discovery of the princess's jewels that, hidden in a small wall niche, had escaped the tomb robbers. These pieces of jewelry and toilet articles of Sit-Hathor-yunet, a daughter of Sesostris II, which closely resembled those from the hoard of Dahshur, were entrusted to Petrie by the antiquities authorities with the exception of four objects. Since British museums were unable to purchase the treasure, the jewels finally came to The Metropolitan Museum, among them the pectoral pictured here. In the center of the design is a raised cartouche with the throne name of Sesostris II over the kneeling figure of the god Heh holding a palm frond, the symbol for years of rule, in each hand. In addition, the figure of a tadpole, the numeral for 100,000, hangs from his left elbow. The central motif is flanked by two falcons of the royal god Horus, each of which carries a sun disk entwined by a uraeus cobra over its head. The message expressed by the pectoral is the ruler's claim to a mythically eternal life and reign. The classical elegance of this piece of jewelry, for which over 370 small inlays were fashioned, is emphasized by a long chain of gold and gemstone beads.

Sesostris III had nevertheless already ordered the construction of a grandiose pyramid complex at Dahshur which, in an expansion in the south, shows elements of the New Kingdom "Houses of Millions of Years." Outside the enclosure walls, entire ships were again buried in deep shafts, as had been customary during the Old Kingdom. His son Amenemhat III developed these changes further in his large pyramid complex at Hawara in the Faiyum. With its decorated chapels and rich array of statues, among them sculptural works of unusual form and expressive power such as the so-called fish-offering statues, this temple complex later impressed the Greek historian Herodotus so much that he believed it to be the original model for the Labyrinth.

The later pyramids at Dahshur and Hawara were built as solid constructions of unbaked mudbricks, as were the smaller, secondary pyramids for queens and princesses. The women were also buried in shaft tombs surrounding the pyramids, however. Astonishingly, the shaft tombs of the princesses of the Twelfth Dynasty, including the precious jewelry buried with the deceased, have remained for the most part untouched by thieves. The fact that they are intact suggests that the plunder of the Middle Kingdom pyramids took place only once knowledge of the precious objects in the secondary tombs had been forgotten.

Thus the passageways leading to the royal tombs were apparently uncovered only when, in relatively modern times, the limestone facing of the royal pyramids was removed and used for other purposes.

The subterranean complexes of the pyramid tombs of the late Middle Kingdom kings, however, become ever more confusing and complicated. Their construction resembles a Senet board game, a type of dice game with obstacles that the deceased played in his tomb in order to reach the netherworld. Presumably the pyramidal superstructures built over these elaborate subterranean complexes, which took years to erect, were hardly ever completed despite the fact that the crowning basalt pyramids with their inscriptions were already delivered, as in the tomb of Khendjer ("Eber") at south Saqqara. All of these complexes were surrounded by undulating enclosure walls, possibly representing the primeval waters, whereas the pyramid symbolizes the primeval mound rising from them.

The last impressive subterranean complex at south Saqqara seems particularly enigmatic, It consists of a sprawling system of corridors that turn many corners, and are planned on different levels, but then after several passage blockings, finally lead to a burial chamber chiseled out of a single block of quartzite weighing more than 150 tons. Upon the block rests a sealing stone of almost equal weight that, so it seems, was never lowered.

Despite all the effort to construct it, apparently this grave remained unused. Still it must have been the tomb, or perhaps the cenotaph, of one of the important kings of the Thirteenth Dynasty who was eventually buried in Abydos. As a result of waning centralized power, his successors in the final years of the Middle Kingdom, residents of Itj-tawy/el-Lisht as well as of Thebes, could erect only small brick pyramids that are known only through meager remains and written records.

A House for Eternity – The Tombs of Governors and Officials

Abdel Ghaffar Shedid

Architecture

The largely autonomous nomarchs, or governors of the Middle Kingdom, begin to build necropolises in their own provinces. We can recognize echoes of royal complexes and continuations of Old Kingdom traditions, but entirely independent developments are evident at individual necropolises.

During the First Intermediate Period, the necropolis of Mo'alla was created south of Thebes on the east bank of the Nile opposite that of Gebelein on the west bank. The traditional tomb form of the mastaba was still used at the necropolis of the royal residence near Memphis, though now in a considerably more modest form than during the late Old Kingdom. As a rule the superstructure is no longer accessible, and only the subterranean coffin chamber is decorated.

The most impressive necropolises of the Middle Kingdom are found in Upper Egypt and especially in Middle Egypt. For the most part, they are constructed at sites with striking natural features, in the cliffsides along the Nile, and have an imposing effect. The power and self-assurance of the ancient builders of the Middle Kingdom are felt by every modern visitor.

During the Eleventh and Twelfth Dynasties, necropolises were built on the steep slopes of the eastern mountain range at Beni Hasan and, to the south, at el-Bersha and Qau el-Kebir, as well as at Mir, Asiut and Deir Rifa on the western side of the Nile and, at the southern border of the territory, at Qubbet el-Hawa opposite Aswan.

Despite differing local developments, the aforementioned cemeteries share the same basic features: influenced by Old Kingdom traditions in building cliff tombs, and using rooms of the simplest design that continued until the Eleventh Dynasty. In the course of development, the concept of the tomb as a house for eternity was emphasized by elements borrowed from secular architecture. First, columns were included, then the tomb facade evolved into a columned portico. Finally, during the Twelfth Dynasty, a central axis from the entrance to the statue chamber at the rear wall of the offering room results from an alignment of successive chambers, thus assimilating the element of a procession or journey from concepts of the hereafter in tomb architecture.

The rulers' tombs at Asiut and Qau el-Kebir, unfortunately very poorly preserved, are among the largest non-royal complexes of the Middle Kingdom. Like the royal burial complexes, individual tombs were built in valleys and included a ramp, pylons, an atrium, a terrace with a hypostyle hall and a sunken room with pillars, and the cliff tomb proper with a transverse hall and statue chambers.

At Thebes, a special tomb type was developed in the necropolis on the west bank of the Nile, known as the Saff tombs. In the flat plain at the foot of the mountain, an outer court of generous dimensions is circumscribed by an enclosure wall. The tomb facade with pillars forming a type of gallery is hewn from the cliff. Along the tomb's central axis, a corridor descends to a cult chamber, and from there a shaft leads to the burial chamber. A second Theban tomb type clearly reflects the change in the concept of mortuary architecture. The tomb is now conceived as a representation of the tomb of Osiris and the underworld given form by a system of corridors leading deep within the mountain to the cult and burial chambers. This new type was important above all for the development of royal tombs during the New Kingdom.

The construction of large cliff tombs stopped abruptly when the governors under Sesostris III lost their power and independence.

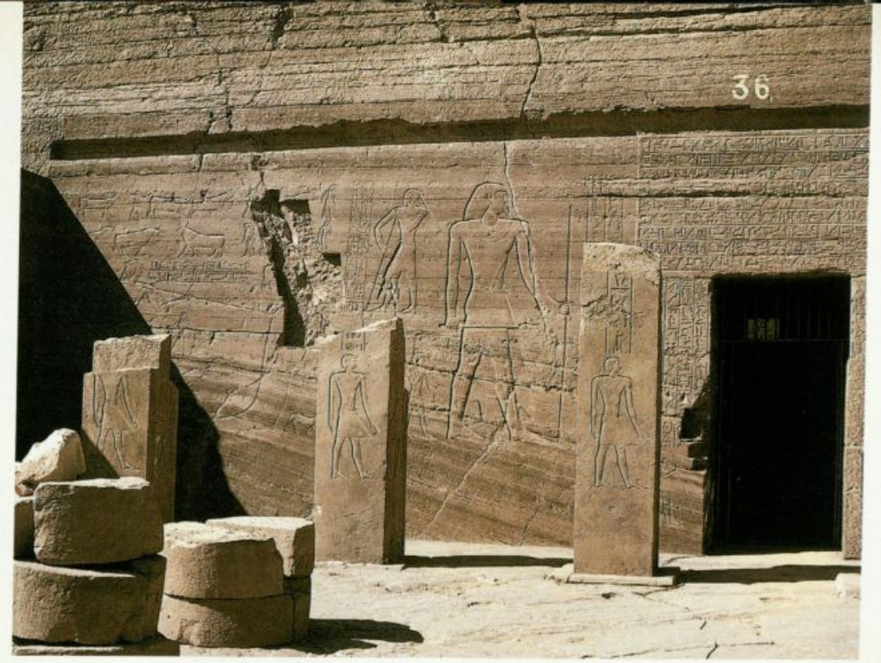
Technique

The cliff tombs were carved out of the solid rock. In order to preserve the facade of the tomb, the cliff face was hewn in a vertical, even surface from the top to the bottom; the entrance or a narrow hypostyle hall was carved into the facade. While digging, builders worked a wide breadth of rock from the entrance towards the rear of the tomb, allowing for the carving of eventual architectural elements such as buttresses, architraves, and so forth. The leftover blocks of stone were transported to the outside in large pieces or were smashed. Stone hammers, copper chisels, and wooden mallets served as tools for this work.

The second step involved chiseling the walls to produce an even surface. Surfaces destined to be decorated with reliefs were filed smooth with stones. Any troublesome, uneven spots in the wall surface were leveled and smoothed with a mortar of limestone and sand that was laid on in varying thicknesses as needed. The final step in the preparatory work was the application of a distemper. This served as a painting ground that could support color yet prevented the raw stone from absorbing too much of the paint's binding agent. The distemper was kept in a neutral tone that blended with the original color of the stone and made corrections in the mortar invisible.

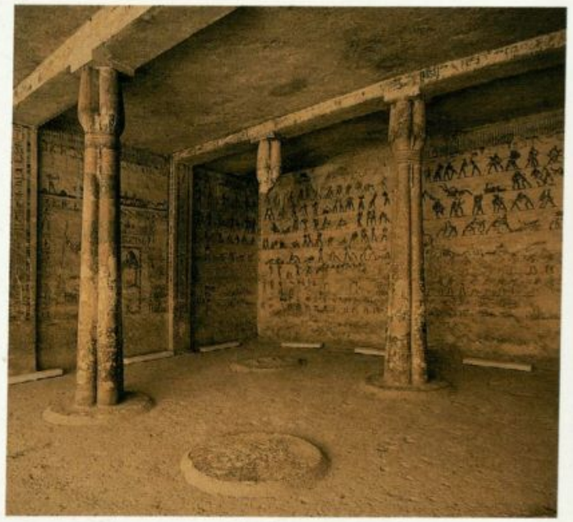
Colors used included blue and turquoise tones, which were already being synthetically manufactured, natural ochre with many variations of yellow, red, and brown, huntite or chalk white, and black made from soot. Presumably a water-soluble tempera based on resins and other organic matter served as a binding agent.

24 Coffin of the nomarch Djehuty-nakht (section of outer coffin, east wall)
el-Bersha, the grave of Djehuty-nakht (10A); Eleventh Dynasty, ca. 2020 BC; cedarwood, painted; length: 262 cm; Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 20.1822-6.
Djehuty-nakht's large chest coffins are without doubt among the most magnificent coffins of all time. Especially the richly detailed paintings on the inside of the outer coffin are considered to be an absolute masterwork of ancient Egyptian painting. All details of the composition – here the central figure of the grave's owner – are depicted with such an unsurpassed finesse of coloration and style that on discovery of the grave (spring 1915) the coffin was at first considered to date from the heyday of the Twelfth Dynasty.

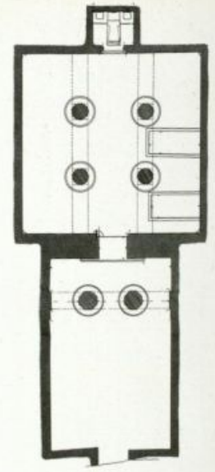


25 Outer court and facade of the tomb of Sarenput I
Qubbet el-Hawa (tomb 36); Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1950 BC.
Following the model of royal tomb complexes, this tomb included a structure in the valley, from which stairs led up to a nearly square outer court. The facade is hewn from the rocky outcrop of red sandstone; in front was a narrow hall whose roof was supported by six pillars only partially preserved. At both ends of this hypostyle hall was a statue of the deceased in a niche. The six pillars bear inscriptions and representations of the tomb owner in sunken relief. The tomb facade itself shows several scenes: left of the entrance, the large figure of the deceased followed by a sandal-bearer and two dogs; adjacent to them on the left, Sarenput spears fish from a small boat; in the scene above he inspects cattle.

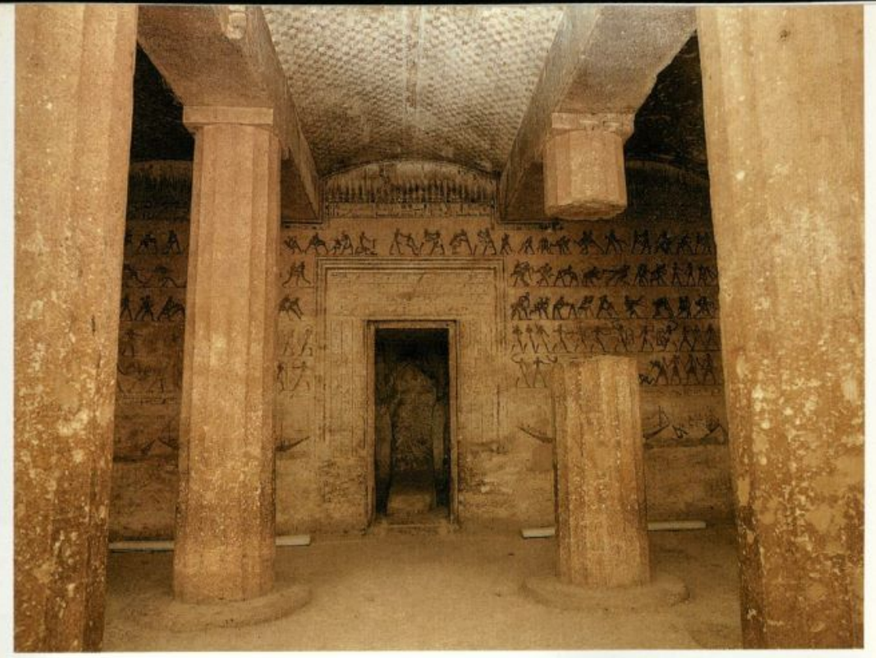
26 View into the tomb of Sarenput II
Qubbet el-Hawa (tomb 31); Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1880 BC.
In this complex, the tomb architecture of Qubbet el-Hawa is at its finest. As in the royal burial complexes, the succession of rooms is strictly axial with an entrance hall, corridor, and cult chamber inside. The austerity of the first, undecorated room is striking with its six mighty, striated sandstone pillars. Nine steps lead up to the rear burial area. The long corridor with its barrel vault is punctuated on each side by three niches bearing half-figure statues of Sarenput in the form of the Osiris mummy. The passageway ends in the square cult chamber. From the entrance to the cult niche the ceiling height decreases from one room section to the next while the level of the floor rises; this has the effect of emphasizing the cult niche as the tomb's innermost sanctuary.



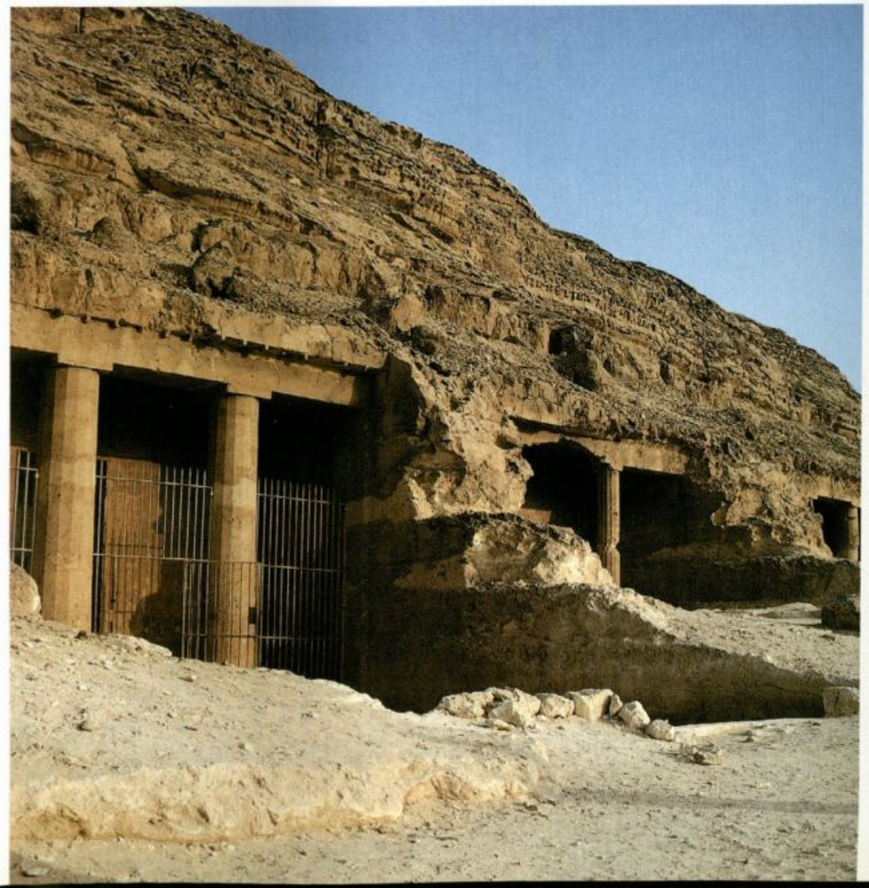
27 View of the northeast corner of the tomb of Khety
Beni Hasan (BH 17); Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1950 BC.
This tomb is an example of the middle phase in the necropolis architecture of Beni Hasan. The rear half of the room is subdivided by two rows of three columns in the form of bunches of lotuses that run parallel to the entrance facade. They are joined to an architrave that continues as narrow pilasters on the side walls and down to the floor. These supports were not statically necessary; they recall the wooden columns of a dwelling in immortal stone and thereby clarify the notion of the tomb as a house for eternity. The original painting in ochre, red, and blue is still preserved on the graceful columns that imitate four lotus stems with closed buds.



28 Floorplan of the tomb of Amenemhat
Beni Hasan (BH2); Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1930 BC.
The succession of rooms consists of an outer court, a columned portico, the burial chamber, and statue niche.



29 Tomb of Amenemhat
Beni Hasan (BH 2); Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1930 BC.
The stately design of the room is impressive. Four 16-sided columns stand in the nearly square hall. Two massive longitudinal architraves connect them in pairs and divide the room into three barrel-vaulted naves. The ceiling vault, which is decorated with a pattern, runs parallel to the east–west axis. The focus of the room's axis is the statue niche in the east wall containing the sculpture in the round of the deceased, his wife, and his mother.



30 Portico facade of the tombs BH 3, 4, and 5 (from left to right)
Beni Hasan; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1930 BC.
The tomb facades were cut vertically into the sloping cliffs, resulting in frontal courts bounded at the sides by the remaining rock. The facades of these latest graves in Beni Hasan are designed as porticoes with two 8- or 16-sided columns and a large architrave. These elements are borrowed from secular architecture and imitate a wooden veranda. The rectangular bosses over the architrave recall the protruding ends of ceiling beams; they are particularly clear on the facade of BH 3 (left). The form of the columns is defined as protodoric, and it anticipates the flutes and sharp edges of later doric columns.

31 Kitchen scene
Western Thebes (TT 60), Tomb of Antefoqer; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1950 BC; painting on stucco over stone.
Very little Theban tomb painting of the Middle Kingdom has survived. Antefoqer, vizier under Amenemhat I, built the tomb for his mother Sened. It shows a wide variety of themes, including the scene here of women baking. They pour the dough out of large, tall containers into small clay pots with tapered bottoms. The figures are well proportioned, but with their angular movements and muted coloration they have a stiff and simple air about them.

33 Donkey carrying sacks
Gebelein, mastaba of Iti; First Intermediate Period, ca. 2120 BC; painting on stucco; H. 84 cm; Turin, Museo Egizio, 14354h.
The animal is precisely rendered with sparing contour lines and a clear distribution of color. With the help of folding perspective, the viewer is quite unambiguously made to understand that the donkey carries two wicker baskets on its back that are fastened with ropes. The basket hanging on the far side of the animal, which is normally invisible, is folded upward in the painted image.

32 Papyrus thicket
Mo'alla, tomb of Ankhtify; First Intermediate Period, ca. 2140 BC; painting on stucco.
The painter of this tomb found a wholly original solution for the traditional scene of the papyrus thicket. In severe abstraction he first created a regular pattern of vertical papyrus stems with umbels between them. In order to soften this rigorous order, he placed birds between them at irregular intervals. In the register below, he used the finest of brushstrokes to add in turn the abstract pattern of the fish, which are more characteristically represented. A delicate pastel, soft coloration makes an interesting contrast to the rigid order. The subjects in the image are placed next to each other without any overlap; the artist has, however, taken care to vary the spaces between them. He plays with the porportions of his subjects and varies them according to their significance for the content of the image, not according to their true size.

Painting and Relief

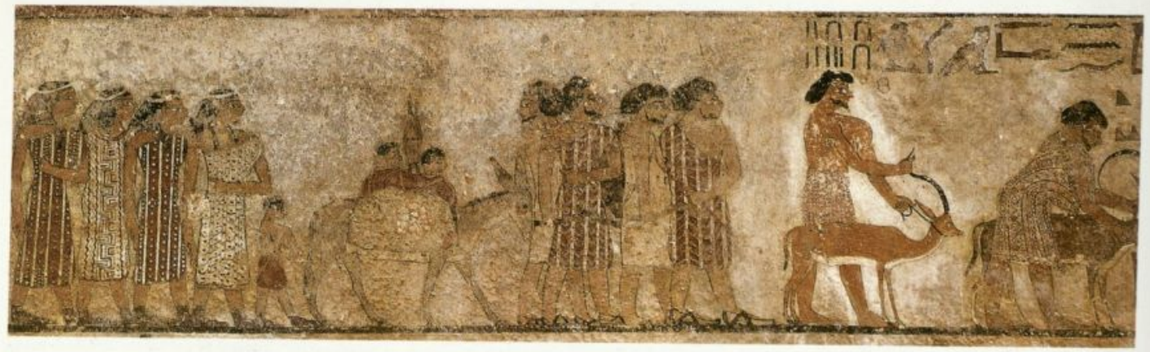
In the private tombs of the Middle Kingdom, pure painting was often preferred over relief carving for the decoration of walls. This can be explained as not merely a consideration of cost, efforts to save time, or technical problems with poor-quality stone. Painting as the sole decorative element for Egyptian private tombs is nothing new; the earliest example, a tomb at Hierakonpolis, dates to predynastic times. Other examples follow from the Third Dynasty (the tomb of Hesy at Saqqara), from the Fourth Dynasty (the mastaba of Nefermaat and his wife Atet, the provenance of the famous geese of Meidum), and from the Sixth Dynasty (the tomb of Kaiemankh in Giza).

Both techniques were also used during the Middle Kingdom. While in the necropolises at el-Bersha, Mir, and Qau el-Kebir the wall pictures were executed as painted reliefs, the gigantic wall surfaces of Beni Hasan, for example, are decorated with paintings. Relief carving was used there only for the false doors. The owners of these large and elaborate complexes of the Twelfth Dynasty decided quite consciously in favor of painted decoration, surely since they appreciated the particular appeal of the possibilities in painting at that time. This expresses a new way of thinking on the part of the projects' commissioners.

Painting in the Middle Kingdom developed from the energy and enthusiasm that characterized the artistic renewal of the First Intermediate Period, during which innovations are clearly recognizable. It is a powerful style that consistently liberated itself from the canons of the Old Kingdom, from all superfluous elements and overly refined detail in favor of clear, well-defined order and easily comprehensible, unambiguous images. Most striking among the formal means of the First Intermediate Period is the clear picture composition, achieved, for example, through the avoidance of overlapping individual motifs.

A number of characteristic perspectives of an object are often combined, which is important for the clarity of representation. The

34 Birds in an acacia tree
Beni Hasan (BH 3), tomb of Khnumhotep II; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1880 BC, painting on stucco over limestone.
One of the most famous images from the tombs of Beni Hasan is this detail from the bird hunt scene. The background is formed by the tree with its sturdy trunk, finely forking branches, delicate green leaves, and yellowish blossom clusters. On top of that is a second layer with a variety of birds. The image is abstracted from nature, but the characteristics of color and pattern are so keenly typified that the individual birds can be identified without difficulty. Despite the complexity of the motif, the artist masterfully understood how to create a harmonious whole.



35 Procession of Asiatics
Beni Hasan (BH 3), tomb of Khnumhotep II; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1880 BC; painting on stucco over limestone.
A special event is recorded on the northern wall of the tomb. The arrival of an Asiatic caravan bringing cosmetics for the governor is such an important and joyful event that it is even recorded with the date, the sixth year of the reign of Sesostris II. In the explanatory inscription, which mentions the name of the group's leader, the name "Hyksos" occurs on a monument for the first time. Four of the foreigners are armed with bows, arrows, and throwsticks; two of them are dressed in red-and-white striped garments and wear sandals on their feet. Their clothing, hairstyles, chin beards, and physiognomies identify them as Asiatics. They drive a donkey on whose back two children are safely tied in a type of saddle basket; between them is an object, possibly a musical instrument.

harmonious proportions of figures and an aesthetic, ideal body type no longer seem to be so important. The size of a represented object in a scene is determined by the significance of its function in life on earth.

The register line running from side to side and dividing the relief surface into horizontal bands is done away with entirely or is replaced by short baselines for individual figures or scenes. The established range of colors varies freely, resulting in completely new combinations. The new, creative use of color is particularly striking. Quite unique solutions are found, such as very strong color contrasts, a rather severely limited color palette, or the most delicate gradations of color, all betraying a sensitivity for special effects and a joy in the use of color.

Precisely this aspect is further developed by the painters of the Middle Kingdom. During the Twelfth Dynasty, a rich color palette of many different shades, free brushwork, the use of opaque color, smooth color transitions, and glazing techniques all mark a highly refined painting culture. The advantages of painting by itself, instead of the rather limiting possibilities of relief sculpture, are due to its ability to unfold freely over the picture surface.

Above all in scenes from nature, impressive moods are achieved through the differentiating of color nuances and the use of complex compositions. Airy landscapes that express, for example, the atmosphere of the desert or pastureland, are effective without a register line. Painted patterns are cleverly composed in order to fit the surfaces dictated by the architecture; cycles of themes are placed with a good deal of consideration.

At the climax of the development, complex compositions and variations on individual scenes are striking that work, for example, with multiple planes in space, the placing of one motif behind the other, overlapping, and even with attempts to paint in linear perspective, optical foreshortening, and effects of light and shade. In painting and reliefs a certain naturalism is attained through the most precise observation of textures, movements, and positions in space, of incidental details. This is the expression of a new interest in the endless variety of nature. The artists of this era develop a sensitivity for visually interesting details and relationships, they attempt innovations with evident pleasure in experimentation and also have, not least, the skill to transpose them technically.

Since the Twelfth Dynasty there is evidence of the use of auxiliary lines much like a proportional grid in the flat surface pictures. They were used on occasion for the sketching of rather large-format figures. The grid represents a further development of the system of coordinates used during the Old Kingdom to establish the proportions of figures with a vertical body axis and seven horizontal lines at the level of particular body parts. The proportional grid developed during the Middle Kingdom, which was based on a unit of measurement corresponding to the width of a fist, and which divided the height of a standing figure into 18 squares, was retained virtually unchanged in Egyptian art for over 1,000 years.

As has already been observed in architecture in earlier chapters, unique local styles developed in the Upper and Middle Egyptian regions. This is true for painting as well as for raised relief sculpture in private tombs. These appear lightly modeled, but do not achieve the freedom that painting does in wall composition. During the late Middle Kingdom, reliefs eventually show a tendency toward detailed, realistic representation. Those who commissioned the works made a conscious decision in favor of painting alone, however, since they preferred its possibilities for delicate interior drawing, gradations of color, and fine shading.

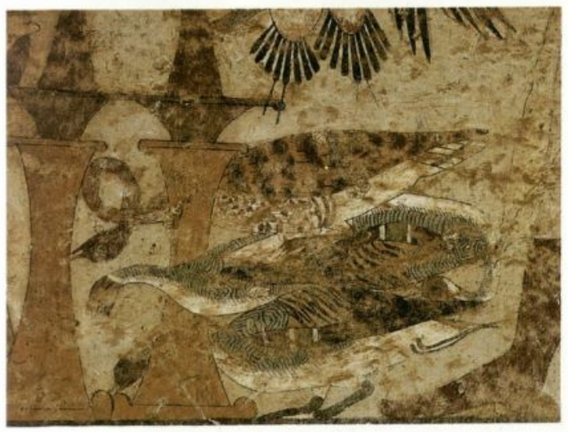
The themes are all familiar ones from the Old Kingdom; the function of subjects represented is still to provide the deceased with everything needed for the hereafter. Thus continuation into the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom of scenes of agriculture, cattle-breeding, trades, hunting, and tables laden with food showed that these are still the most important subjects. The only truly new motif is the pilgrimage to Abydos, the illustration of the deceased's voyage along the Nile to the cult site of Osiris.

For the traditional themes, the artists of the Middle Kingdom devised a sheer endless variety of new compositions, approaches, and ways to embellish or develop motifs. The scenes come to life, their figures move with energy.

Although the objects represented were intended for the hereafter, the cliff tombs of the governors afford an exceedingly vivid picture of contemporary daily life, and even of particular events in the lives of the individuals who commissioned them. These men address the viewers of the images, wishing to communicate their eminence through the impressive and representative impact of their tombs.

36 The tomb owner at a table laden with food
Qubbet el-Hawa, tomb of Sarenput II; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1880 BC.
The focus of the imposing tomb complex is this small cult chamber. The painted ceiling of the naos or shrine is divided in the middle by a band of hieroglyphs on a white ground and with red-brown zig-zag stripes painted on a yellow ground imitating a stretched mat. The side walls and the middle ground are framed by a colored border and from underneath by a base with several stripes; the background is an intense light blue. Sarenput II sits on a lion-legged chair and extends his hand toward the food table before him. His son brings him lotus flowers. The inscriptions include the name of the ruling king Amenemhat II twice in cartouches; on the left is a rarely occurring hieroglyph: the elephant, the sign for Elephantine.

37 Figure of a woman on a proportional grid
Qubbet el-Hawa, tomb of Sarenput II; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1880 BC.
Under the partially flaking paint a grid is visible. It is painted black on the background of the wall and is, in part, quite imprecise in its measurements. Moreover, while tracing the figure, the artist did not keep exactly to the divisions of the space: the hairline and nose are placed at the "correct" axis of the grid, but other standard points of reference such as the shoulder and the armpits are placed with no regard for the rules. These imperfections, as well as the fact that only relatively few figures were painted this way, indicate that the proportional grid – at least in the private tombs – provided only a general orientation for the artist. It can by no means be understood as the exclusive tool needed to determine the proportions.

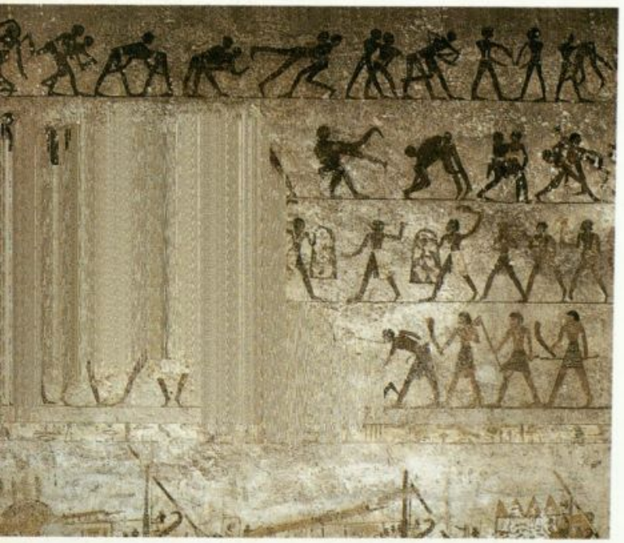


38 Group of offering bearers
Beni Hasan (BH 3), tomb of Khnumhotep II; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1880 BC; painting on stucco over limestone.
A telling example for the layering of picture motifs in several levels is this group bringing offerings. The fowl are truly woven in between the high incense stands. A beautiful line is sought; the motif is characterized by smooth contours. At the same time this shows a refined painting culture with the finest gradations of color and a delicate composition in which the emphasis is on yellowish and red-ochre tones contrasting with different shades of turquoise. The interior patterns of the four animals display ever varying sequences.

39 The feeding of sable antelopes
Beni Hasan (BH 3); tomb of Khnumhotep II; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1880 BC; painting on stucco over limestone.
The artist's inventive creativity manifests itself here in the composition of the group. Three planes in space are used in which first the lying, then the standing antelopes, and finally the herdsman keeping up the rear are arranged. The movements of this second herdsman are complicated. He seems to turn his back to the viewer and press his shoulders downward – creating an impression of perspective foreshortening of the shoulders. The way in which the group is unified as a whole is also masterful. The rounded back of the herdsman on the right is echoed in the horns of the standing antelope, and taken up again by the rear arm of the second herdsman.

40 Female acrobats playing ball
Beni Hasan (BH 15), tomb of Baket; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1970 BC; painting on stucco over limestone.
A popular theme in the tombs of Beni Hasan is that of movement games and dances. Here four girls play an acrobatic ball game, shown in a strikingly concise drawing style. Each player sits on her partner's back and throws balls to the player opposite. The girls wear knee-length white dresses with straps, turquoise-colored faience jewelry on arms and ankles, and broad collars. Three long, thin braids ending in tassels are attached to their close-cropped wigs.

41 Herdsman
Meir (B2), tomb of Ukhhotep; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1900 BC; painted limestone.
A scrawny herdsman reduced almost to a skeleton, with matted hair and a ragged loincloth of fur leads three robust, well-tended cattle on a rope. This relief bespeaks a joy in striking contrasts and in the type-casting of people. The image almost qualifies as sunk relief; the background around the picture's subjects has hardly been worked; the contours are incised with lines of irregular width.



42 Wrestlers and a battle around a fortress
Beni Hasan (BH 2), tomb of Amenemhat; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1930 BC; painting on stucco over limestone.
The tombs of governors at Beni Hasan are famous for their depictions of wrestlers. A total of fifty-nine pairs of wrestlers in this tomb show the most widely varying sequences of movement, spectacular leaps and falls, and ever new grips and pulls. In order to better differentiate them, the opponents are represented in two different tones of brown. The two lower registers belong to a scene of a battle around a fortress. The marching soldiers are armed with spears, battle-axes, clubs, bows, and arrows. With the Egyptian soldiers march several Libyans who stand out with their colorful kilts and their fine chin beards. The lower register shows the journey to Abydos. This is the oldest inscribed depiction of this theme in Egyptian art.

43 The daughters of Djehutyhotep
El-Bersha (tomb 2), tomb of Djehutyhotep; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1900 BC; painted limestone; H. 80 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 30199.
The images in the tombs of el-Bersha are executed in paper-thin relief. The women with their slim bodies and severe, somewhat coarse, facial features seem relatively formal. Their headbands embroidered with blue and pink lotus flowers sit perfectly straight on their heads; the ends of the ribbons hang down stiffly. The artist has painted the thin red contour lines and, most of all, the internal detail in admirably accurate brushwork. The fashionable wigs are rendered with particular detail, their fine strands tied several times with red bands and their ends curled tightly around disks of carnelian, as are the large pectorals that hang from several rows of turquoise-colored faience chains.

Stelae

In the First Intermediate Period, painted funerary complexes such as those at Gebelein or Mo'alla are rather the exception. For the most part, the decoration of a cliffside tomb or a simple mudbrick mastaba was reduced to a stone tablet embedded in the wall. Similarly, at the Middle Kingdom necropolis of the residence at Memphis, the walls of the superstructures over the private tombs are virtually devoid of decoration; a simple stela is often the only surface on which texts and images appear.

This stela is the indispensable mimimum decoration of a tomb. In principle it contains three elements needed to ensure the afterlife of the deceased. First and foremost, the inscriptions must be mentioned along with their most important component, the offering text. This is a request for the provision of all necessary items for the afterlife. Also included in the inscriptions are prayers, the name of the deceased, his or her title, dates, and genealogical information. The second element of the stela is the representation of the tomb owner who thereby lives on in eternity; the third is the offerings table piled high with food, guaranteeing that the deceased will always be provided for.

In their artistic and technical execution, Middle Kingdom stelae vary considerably. Occasionally produced by simple mass production, the stelae were also affordable for members of the lower classes. Indeed, with their texts they are an important source for our understanding of the religious beliefs of these people. Most stelae of the Middle Kingdom have a vertical format, the upper edge is rounded, the figures are executed in low relief, and the text in sunk relief.

44 Tomb stela of Amenemhat
Western Thebes; Asasif, tomb of Amenemhat (R 4); Eleventh/Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1980 BC; painted limestone; H. 30 cm, W. 50 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 45626.
The members of a family are shown on this stela from the Asasif (tomb R 4). The father and mother sit on a lion-legged bench with a low backrest. The mother has a basket out of which peeks the handle of a mirror. Between the parents sits their son; they hold each other's hands and shoulders. The daughter-in-law at the right edge of the picture stands before the offering table on which pieces of meat, a string of onions, and lettuce are piled; under it are two loaves of bread. The horizontal line of hieroglyphs above this scene is carved in typical sunk relief; it contains funerary formulas and the names of the parents. The stela is a composition of intense and pure colors. The deep red-brown and yellow ochre skin colors, the white of the clothing, and the clear green of the hieroglyphs and jewelry all contrast equally well with the light blue background. The composition is tight and balanced; the rendering of the human figure now seems confident again compared to the style of the First Intermediate Period.

Funerary Sculpture

As in the Old Kingdom, the sculptural representation of the tomb owner during the Middle Kingdom was an essential part of the private tomb. Whereas this figure was once sealed in a chamber, the *serdab*, and thus hidden from visitors to the tomb, it now stood in a prominent position, for example in a statue niche, the focal point of the sepulchre. It is now obviously intended to be seen by the visitor and also meant to be a monument. In addition, the tomb statue retains its traditional function, to serve as a substitute image for the represented individual who, through it, could exist for all eternity and receive the mortuary cult. Unfortunately, almost no funerary statues have been preserved whole and in their original location, and it is therefore an exception when we can associate a statue with a particular tomb. The majority of tomb statues are of rather small size. Their often undifferentiated, schematic execution and rough styling lead us to surmise that they were mass-produced for members of the lower classes.

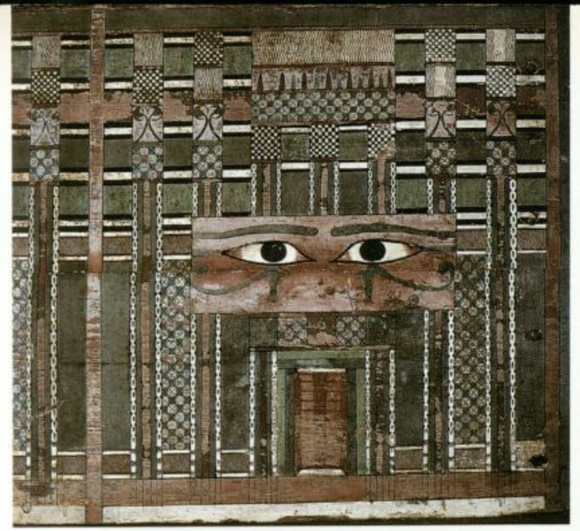
The classical poses of the Old Kingdom are still the most commonly used: the seated figure, signaling that the tomb owner is of an elevated social class, and the standing figure, suggesting his

45 Stela of Antef
Western Thebes, Dra Abu el-Naga; Ninth Dynasty, ca. 2125 BC; limestone; H. 106 cm, W. 73 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 20009.
The stela comes from the tomb of Antef, governor of Thebes and inspector of priests in the necropolis of Dra Abu el-Naga. It is a so-called false door stela that borrows the false door framing elements of the cavetto cornice and torus moulding. The deceased can in an abstract sense emerge from the hereafter through the leaves of the double door in the lower center of the stela to receive any needed provisions. To the right and left of the door, offerings of animals are presented by small servant figures, and a bull is slaughtered. The middle field of the stela is filled by the depiction of the tomb owner under a baldachin; he is accompanied by figures bearing sandals and whisks, and a servant hands him beer. The food provisions are piled in front of the baldachin. The three upper lines of hieroglyphs bear the offering formulas. The composition is characteristic for the period: the pictured objects are placed next to each other and are simple, clear, and neatly arranged.

46/47 Cuboid statue of Hetep (above)
Saqqara, tomb of Hetep; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1975 BC; painted limestone; H. 85 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 48857.
Cuboid statue of Hetep (below)
Saqqara, tomb of Hetep; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1975 BC; painted gray granite; H. 74 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 48858.
Both cuboid statues from the tomb of Hetep are among the earliest examples of this new statue type. Their composition and carefully considered, detailed decoration demonstrate particularly well the concept of resurrection underlying this figure type. The figures were found in two adjacent chambers of the tomb, their faces turned toward the rising sun. The granite statue stood in the southern chamber toward Upper Egypt; the limestone statue stood in the northern chamber toward Lower Egypt. The cuboid statues represent the moment in which the deceased frees himself from a compact form; head, arms, and legs are already in the light. This compact unit can be compared to the "primeval mound" out of which, according to Egyptian belief, the world emerged. The deceased wishes to take part in the perpetually repeating diurnal and nocturnal journey of the sun god. The inscriptions define the granite figure as corresponding to the daytime journey; the limestone statue represents the nighttime journey.

48 Group statue of Ukhhotep
Mir, tomb of Ukhhotep; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1860 BC; gray granodiorite; H. 37 cm, W. 30 cm, D. 14 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 30965 (CG 459).
This family portrait comes from the tomb of Ukhhotep, one of the last governors of Middle Egypt. He is shown with his two wives and daughter. The four figures stand in strict frontality in seemingly stiff poses against a stela with a rounded top. At each edge of the stela are a papyrus and lotus plant, the heraldic emblems of northern and southern Egypt. Ukhhotep is framed by two incised udjat eyes, which serve to connect him to the Egyptian cosmos. The figures' hairstyles and clothing reflect contemporary fashion, and their names and titles are inscribed on their garments. The somewhat coarse rendering of the faces makes for little differentiation between man and woman. The proportioning of the bodies is also typical: slim, with a high, thin waist and exaggeratedly long limbs.

49 Standing figure of Nakhti
Asiut, tomb 7; early Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1950 BC; painted acacia wood, with inlaid eyes; H. 179 cm; Paris, Musée du Louvre, E11937.
During the First Intermediate Period and the beginning of the Middle Kingdom, wood was still used frequently for funerary statues. Stylistically, this standing figure of the vizier Nakhti, with its highly elongated proportions, is typical for this period. The calf-length kilt is rendered in smooth planes meeting at sharp edges; the body and head are only flatly and sparingly modeled. A particular gesture distinguishes this figure from many other similar statues: Nakhti places his right hand in a fold of his kilt.



50 Coffin of Senbi (detail)
Mir (B1); Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1920 BC; painted wood, H. 63 cm, L. 212 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 42948.
This rectangular coffin is an especially fine example of the notion of the coffin as a home for eternity. The architectonic details, the base and posts of the wooden construction, the doors with their two leaves, the finely patterned mats, and bands with which the facade is hung are all delicately painted. The artist has achieved a pleasing contrast of colors by emphasizing variations of green and red-brown with more intense fields of color dispersed between them.

51 Coffin of Sepi (detail)
El-Bersha, tomb of Sepi (III); Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1920 BC; painted wood; W. 65 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 32868.
While the exteriors of the coffin bear only simple bands of hieroglyphs, the interior walls are richly painted with pictorial motifs in notably fine brushwork. At the foot end illustrated here, coffin texts appear on the bottom half; above, under the hieroglyphic sign for the heavens decorated with stars, the text reads: "Provided for by Isis, who is at your feet, General Sepi, the justified." Large storage silos with a columned front hall are pictured in the register below.

continued ability to move. Figures of scribes are only rarely produced. A new type that emerges in various private tombs is the mummiform niche figure. A second new figure type originally developed exclusively for Middle Kingdom private sculpture continued for over one and a half millennia into the Late Period: the so-called cuboid or block statue. The represented person squats on the floor with bent knees and wrapped in a cloak. The whole body seems to be enclosed in a cube; only the head, and sometimes also the feet, arms, and hands are included outside the geometric form.

Primarily hard stones such as diorite or granite, which are difficult to work, are preferred to wood as the material of choice. The technical perfection of the sculptures is striking. Even in the hardest stone, fine details and delicate modeling is achieved and the surface is polished to a velvety shimmer.

Several iconographic details can be identified as typical for the Middle Kingdom. Examples include the long kilt worn by men that reaches from the chest or hips as far as the ankles, or the wide cloak that wraps around the entire figure, terminating at the chest. The men wear either heavy shoulder-length wigs or wigs with pointed ends reaching down to the chest, or their heads are clean-shaven. On the wigs for the women, the two locks of hair with ends rolled up in tight curls are particularly outstanding. The facial expression has become more individualized; the sculptors emphasize characteristic, realistic features.

Sculptured heads at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom still exude above all power and energy; but during the course of their development the expressions become softer. The face is clearly readable through the wide eyes, often large and high-set ears, and the mouth; the elements are juxtaposed like the hieroglyphs of an inscription. With their emphasis on large, simple planes, their dignified and individualized facial features, and the merging of the abstract, cubic form with realistic, plastic detail, the private sculptures produced during the Twelfth Dynasty are among the finest creations of Egyptian sculpture.

Coffins

The coffins of the Middle Kingdom show rich decoration. In private coffins, locally differentiated types developed. For the most part their form and painted decoration reflect the notion that they serve as a home for eternity. The most common coffin type is made of single planks of wood in a rectangular form, with an exterior painted with architectural and decorative elements borrowed from the construction of houses. During the course of the Middle Kingdom, anthropoid (human form) coffins appear for the first time as inner coffins are painted to represent a mummy swathed in linen. This coffin form became the most important during the New Kingdom.

The coffin is oriented facing east; consequently at or near the head end a pair of eyes is often painted, enabling the deceased to "see" outside. He or she could thus observe the sun rising in the east, watch the journey of Re throughout the day or his or her own participation in it, and observe the mortuary rites taking place in the tomb. Here we most often see the depiction of a false door that was to allow the soul of the deceased to leave and enter. Among other motifs, the so-called frieze of tools should be mentioned, a listing of useful objects in pictorial form of which the deceased can make use in the hereafter.

On the inside walls are offering formulas and lists. Also included are the so-called coffin texts, a collection of spells intended to accompany and protect the deceased on his journey to the hereafter.

Shabtis, Servant Figures, Models

"O you *Shabti*, if I am obliged to perform any task that is performed in the underworld – that is if a man there is ordered to the performance of his task – then oblige yourself (to) that which is done there, to cultivate the fields and irrigate the banks, to ferry over the 'sand' (fertilizer) of

52 Statuette of a woman bearing offerings
Western Thebes (TT 280), tomb of Meketre; Eleventh Dynasty, ca. 1990 BC; painted wood; H. 123 cm, W. 17 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 46725.
This relatively large, particularly beautifully worked figure of a servant also comes from the tomb of Meketre. She must be understood as the personification of a donation who offers her gifts. On her head she carries a woven basket containing four clay pots sealed with conical lumps of clay. In her right hand she holds a duck. This symbolic representation is already familiar to us from the long rows of offering bearers in Old Kingdom wall reliefs and paintings. The slim figure of the woman wears elaborate clothing and jewelry. Over her close-fitting dress is a net of red and turquoise-colored tube beads; the lower hem and the straps are decorated with several different patterns. Multi-colored bracelets and anklets complete her elegant outfit.

53 Funerary figure (Shabti) of Djaf.
Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1800 BC; surpentinite; H. 11.6 cm; Basel, Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig, inv. BSAe 1021.
The figure of Djaf is styled in a pure mummy form and fitted with a straight wig. The inscription on the body contains an offering formula invoking Osiris, the god of the dead. The official title of the grave's owner is given as manger of the main accounting office. During the Twelfth Dynasty such funerary figures represented a substitute body for the dead person. It was first during the change from the Twelfth to the Thirteenth Dynasty that their function as deputies for work in the afterlife was defined and the figures inscribed with chapter six of the Book of The Dead. They were then known as Shabtis, and in the following period became an indispensable part of funerary equipment.

the east and the west. 'I will do it, I am here', you should say." This text appears at the end of the Twelfth Dynasty on the so-called *shabtis*, small, mummiform figurines laid in tombs and fashioned mostly of stone, wood, or faience. The name *shabti* ("answerer") explains their function. They are "answer figures," who must respond to their master's order to work and, on his behalf, take upon themselves the unpleasant tasks of irrigating and fertilizing in the life beyond, labors regarded as drudgery compared to the work of ploughing, sowing, and harvesting. Since the beginning of the Middle Kingdom they form part of the burial equipment, at first only for private individuals. As precursors of the figures, one might consider the small, substitute mummies, the naked wax or clay figures wrapped in bandages and buried in tiny coffins in order to replace the mummy of the deceased in case of damage or destruction. Some of the *shabtis* can be identified as belonging to particular tomb owners due to the names and genealogical information inscribed upon them. As of the Twelfth Dynasty they also bear offering formulas.

A further group of statuettes that were also produced exclusively as burial equipment are the so-called servant statues that are shown carrying out particular tasks. Contrary to the function of the *shabtis* as representatives of the tomb owner, the function of servant statues is also fulfilled by tomb reliefs and paintings: as statues, reliefs or paintings, they ensure the continuing existence of the tomb owner in the hereafter, provide him with food, uphold the social status prescribed by his public offices, and entertain him.

While Old Kingdom servant statues as individual sculptures are made of limestone with relative care, during the Middle Kingdom they are for the most part fashioned in wood and painted. Since the First Intermediate Period, several individuals could be mounted on a board and combined to create model groups. These figural groups are complemented by the appropriate surroundings, buildings, craftsmen's tools, and so forth. Thus entire slaughterhouses, bakeries, carpenters' and weavers' workshops are assembled, as well as diverse models of ships for travel, trade, or for the journey to Abydos, for example, but also ships with troops of soldiers commensurate with the tomb owner's office.

54 Assessing the cattle (model)
Western Thebes (TT 280), tomb of Meketre; Eleventh Dynasty, ca. 1990 BC; painted wood, H. 55.5 cm, L. 173 cm, W. 72 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 46724.
Cattle are driven before several farmers and herdsmen in order to be counted for taxation purposes. Scribes and officials sit in a small pavilion on a raised platform whose roof is supported by four delicate columns in the shape of bundles of papyrus. The tomb owner himself sits in a chair, observing the procedure. In front of him, a delinquent cattle-herd is being punished by flogging.

Such scenes are already familiar from the decorative programs on the walls of the great Old Kingdom mastabas where they are separated into single motifs and juxtaposed in registers. But now the groups of models include the surroundings of the action and, in their three-dimensionality, gain a sense of space. Furthermore, within that space they can show the interplay of several separate yet simultaneous activities involving many figures, making the scene seem more lifelike and realistic, like a modern-day snapshot.

The groups are placed in the tombs in order to complement the wall paintings or to serve as substitutes for them. With their rich variety of motifs, they provide for the afterlife of the tomb owner in every way. Typical scenes include farming and cattle-breeding, the storage of goods, the preparation of foods and the production of widely varying objects for everyday use.

The single figures in these models differ greatly in style and technical execution; some are finished very neatly and with great care. Most of them show the mark of a practiced and sure hand, but also appear to have been made quite quickly, in which case fine detail and the working of the surface are unimportant.

During the Middle Kingdom it became usual to place the models in the shaft or the subterranean burial chamber where they were safer from tomb robbers. The sites where they are found are concentrated in Middle and Upper Egypt. Only at the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty does the production of these servant figures come to an end.

The figures in the model groups represent no particular individuals; they remain anonymous and their sole purpose is to fulfill an important function for the continued existence of the tomb owner. The decisive difference from sculptures representing the tomb owner or his or her family is that with the servant figures the artist freely varies the canon of figural representation and makes numerous exceptions to the usual rules. A great variety of poses are often shown almost exaggerated, with sweeping gestures; rigorous composition and frontality were abandoned. Portraiture too can play no part here. The facial expressions are unforced, the proportioning is, on the whole, careless. But it is precisely in this way that they gain in expressive quality and do not seem staged but rather grant us – although intended for the hereafter – a glimpse of earthly life in Egypt during the closing years of the third millennium BC.

Between Heaven and Earth – Temples to the Gods in the Middle Kingdom

Regine Schulz

In ancient Egypt, temples were meeting places for humans and gods, the living and the dead. They symbolized and guaranteed the existence and permanence of creation. This guarantee was secured on the one hand through the daily practice of the cult and observance of the festivals, and on the other through the magical power evoked by the concept of the shrine with its architectural layout and program of texts and images. The different levels of this system stem from a common notion, but were only effective as a whole. In its content, the cult rituals performed in the temples is to be understood as communication between a human and a deity whereby the initiative is taken by the human, and the god functions as the beneficiary of the cult ritual.

Temples were considered part of heavenly and earthly reality. Inside them on a heavenly plane, the gods were provided for and given satisfaction by the king; in the exterior region on the earthly level, humans were heard by the gods. Mediators between these levels were the king and his attending priesthood. The king possessed a double function, however, as he performed not only the cult of the gods but was himself also the beneficiary of a cult. The concept and practice of the cult in Old and Middle Kingdom temples to the gods can only be reconstructed to a very limited extent, however, due to the buildings' poor state of preservation. Texts that could give clues about them exist only as fragments or do not tell us much of value.

From the Cultic Hut to the Temple of the Gods

Cults of kings and gods characterized life in Egypt from prehistoric times. The first cult image or fetish huts consisted of a wooden framework and woven mats. Their exterior form varied and was independent of the object of the cult, its function, or its location. In early dynastic times, mudbrick structures began to replace these more transitory constructions, and by the beginning of the Old Kingdom at the latest, stone was also used for door frames, supports, and shrines. The spatial articulation of these complexes began to be ever more differentiated, and evidence suggests that, next to the chamber holding the cult image, there were also visitation rooms and offering table rooms. The image and text program, that is the decoration of these buildings, can no longer be reconstructed. It is certain, however, that besides the cult images in the sanctuary, there were also figures in the temple or the exterior area, which facilitated the meeting of the humans and the gods.

The Gods and the Omnipotence of the King

This picture changes at about the time of the pyramid age. Whereas for earthly and heavenly sites in this world, that is for residential buildings, palaces, and temples to the gods, mudbrick continued to be used as building material, for the deceased king huge stone complexes for the funerary cult were created. Temples constructed exclusively of stone, such as the Sphinx Temple at Giza or the obelisk-like solar shrines built with masonry, must be seen as exceptions for they stood in direct relationship to the royal pyramid complexes. Accordingly, their function lay not only in the joining of heaven and earth, but also in the joining of this life with the next. For the pharaoh was believed to be the divine Horus and son of the sun god, and was thus the guarantor for all aspects of creation. Creation was not thought to be a completed act, and needed continual confirmation as well as individual and constant renewal through every newly enthroned king.

The Gods and the King – A Powerful Partnership

The steady waning of royal domestic political power during the Sixth Dynasty led to the collapse of the Old Kingdom, to the internal division of the land, and to a deep-seated religious crisis. The trust in pharaoh's omnipotence was destroyed, and the presence of the gods on earth was endangered. Now humans were responsible for life on earth while the hereafter was the responsibility of the mythical god-king Osiris, who was independent of the actual circumstances of this world.

It took over 150 years before Mentuhotep II (Eleventh Dynasty) managed to reunite the country and inspire new trust in the religious

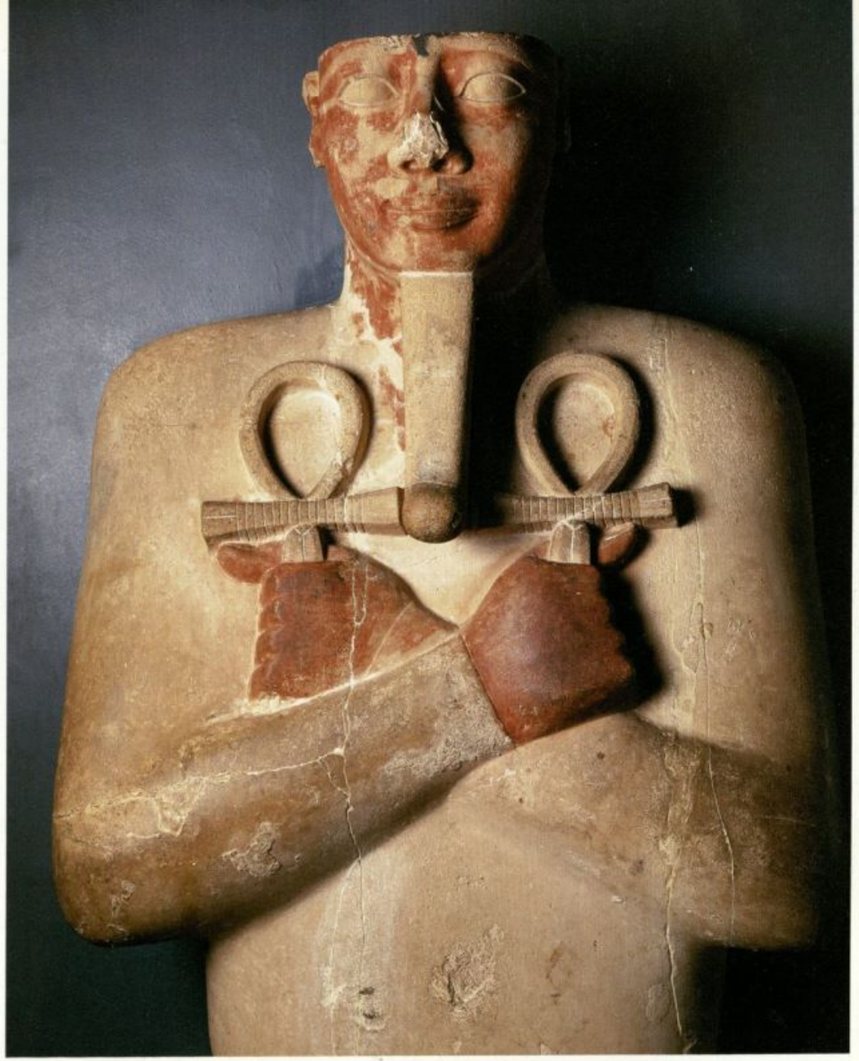
55 Sphinx of Amenemhat II
Tanis; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1900 BC; red granite; H. 204 cm, L. 480 cm; Paris, Musée du Louvre, A 23.
The original location of this powerfully rendered sphinx is unknown and only a few traces of Amenemhat II's inscription are preserved, since the monument was usurped several times. The name of the Hyksos ruler Apophis as well as those of the kings Merenptah and Sheshonq I can be made out. Thus we can assume that the sphinx first stood in the Hyksos capital Avaris, was taken from there to the city of Pi-Ramesse and finally to Tanis during the Twenty-second Dynasty. In its almost brutal directness, brought out by the sculptor's metallically clear carving, the Louvre sphinx can be regarded among the greatest masterpieces of Egyptian royal sculpture of all time.

56 Mentuhotep II at the festival of renewal
Armant, temple of the king; Eleventh Dynasty, ca. 1990 BC; limestone; H. 80 cm, W. 135 cm; New York, The Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 37.16 E.
The block from Armant shows two scenes: to the left, Mentuhotep II during the *sed* – the race for the renewal of his royal power and, to the right, the king before the goddess Yunit, a companion of the god Montu in Armant. The finely modeled flat relief, compared to the very powerful, undetailed style of Thebes, suggests the increasing influence of Memphite schools of artists in the Theban area.

57 Mentuhotep II
Dendara, scene from the king's chapel; Eleventh Dynasty, ca. 2010 BC; limestone; H. of the king's figure 90.5 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 46068.
Mentuhotep II regarded Hathor as his special patron goddess. As her primary cult site in Dendara he had a small royal cult chapel constructed. The scene showing the enthroned ruler comes from this building. In one hand he holds the flail, while the other is extended toward the offerings heaped before him. The Horus falcon hovering over him gives the king life.

58 (opposite) Obelisk of Sesostris I
Heliopolis; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1925 BC; red granite; H. 20.41 m.
On the occasion of his renewal festival, Sesostris had two massive obelisks erected before the Atum temple at Heliopolis. Obelisks symbolized the close link between the king and the sun god and thus ensured the perpetual regeneration of creation. Their development began with examples executed in masonry in the shrines to the sun of the Fifth Dynasty from Abu Gurab. They received their final form only later at Heliopolis with a tall shaft and pyramidion point.

59 "Osiride pillar" of Sesostris I
Karnak, Amun temple; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1950 BC; painted limestone; H. 158 cm; Luxor, The Luxor Museum of Ancient Egyptian Art, J.174.
So-called Osiride pillars were erected in front of the facade of the Amun temple at Karnak during the reign of Sesostris I, probably to flank the main entrance. The statue pictured here is well preserved; only the separately worked crown and the legs have been lost. The body of the figure is shaped like a mummy, the arms are crossed, and each hand emerges from the white-painted wrappings holding an ankh. A large beard with a turned up end reaches down to the hands. All of these elements are typological and iconographical references to Osiris, the god of the underworld. The existence of Osiride statues of kings in front of facades or pillars at other temples of the Middle Kingdom has also been documented, for example at Armant or Abydos. They must be clearly distinguished from standing royal statues wearing the *sed* cloak that suggest the individual renewal of the king's power. In a clever fashion, through the "Osiride pillars," the perpetuation of the actual king's cult in this life is extended by the mythical perpetuation of Osiris, king of the underworld, thus ensuring the creative power of the god worshipped in the temple.



principle of the cult as a guarantee of creation. The fundamental belief was that the gods chose the ruler and imbued him with the necessary legitimacy so that he in turn could see to the preservation of world order, ward off chaos, and provide for both humans and gods. The cult of the king thus became a permanent element in the cult of the gods, and chapels for royal statues were integrated into divine temples. In the pictorial program of these chapels, motifs such as the designation, provision, and coronation of the king by the gods as well as the conquest of enemies by the ruler (as in Gebelein or Dendara) were of primary importance.

A type of mixed architecture in brick and stone was characteristic of many sacred buildings of this period. Some complexes were conceived as analogies for the rooms of secular dwellings, which underlined the connection to life on this earth. On the other hand, the relationship of these temples to the hereafter was reflected by other elements. Mummiform pillar statues of the king exemplify this concept expressing the connection between the material ruler and Osiris. Among the oldest examples of this type are those erected for Mentuhotep II in the temple of Montu at Armant, near Thebes.

Temples for Eternity

Countless building projects were undertaken during the forty-five-year reign of Sesostris I. This king built temples of stone at almost all the country's important cult sites; these replaced the older brick constructions. Monuments were consecrated not only to gods, but also to deified ancestors such as Snefru and to patron deities such as Heqaib in Elephantine. The variety of the decorated shrines corresponded to the many forms of divine presence for the enhancement of royal power.

60 Amun receives Sesostris I
Karnak, "White Chapel," pillar relief; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1925 BC; limestone; H. of the entire picture field ca. 260 cm.
The sixteen pillars of the "White Chapel" are decorated on all sides with inscriptions and a total of sixty picture fields. The pictorial program shows the king's cult rituals before Amun, who is shown in his various aspects, as well as the god's granting of life, permanence, and protection. Here the falcon-headed god Montu leads the king to Amun, who extends an ankh toward him. The inscription above the scene tells that the event takes place in conjunction with the king's festival of renewal. Such representations complement the actual event with an eternal cult – since it is depicted in stone – and therefore signify cultic perpetuation.

Along with the rise of the god Amun in the Middle Kingdom came the importance of his cult site of Karnak. Sesostris I had the older buildings completely replaced.

The front of the complex consisted of an open garden surrounded by columns and a group of Osiride pillars in front of the facade; the rear consisted of a succession of three central cult and auxiliary rooms. A cult image shrine of Amun made of granodiorite, which was found south of the seventh pylon, must also have belonged to the main temple.

Another building of Sesostris I in Karnak ranks among the most beautiful of the Middle Kingdom. The so-called "White Chapel," a way station erected on the occasion of the king's first festival of renewal (*sed*), was torn down during the New Kingdom and its materials rebuilt into the foundation of the pylon of Amenophis III. The structure, which today has been almost completely reconstructed from the original blocks, has sixteen pillars and two access ramps opposite one another. A pedestal stands in the middle that might have held a double figure of the King with Amun-Re-Kamutef; today only the foot slab remains. In conjunction with his renewal festival, Sesostris I also created new complexes in Heliopolis and erected two tall obelisks in front of the Atum temple.

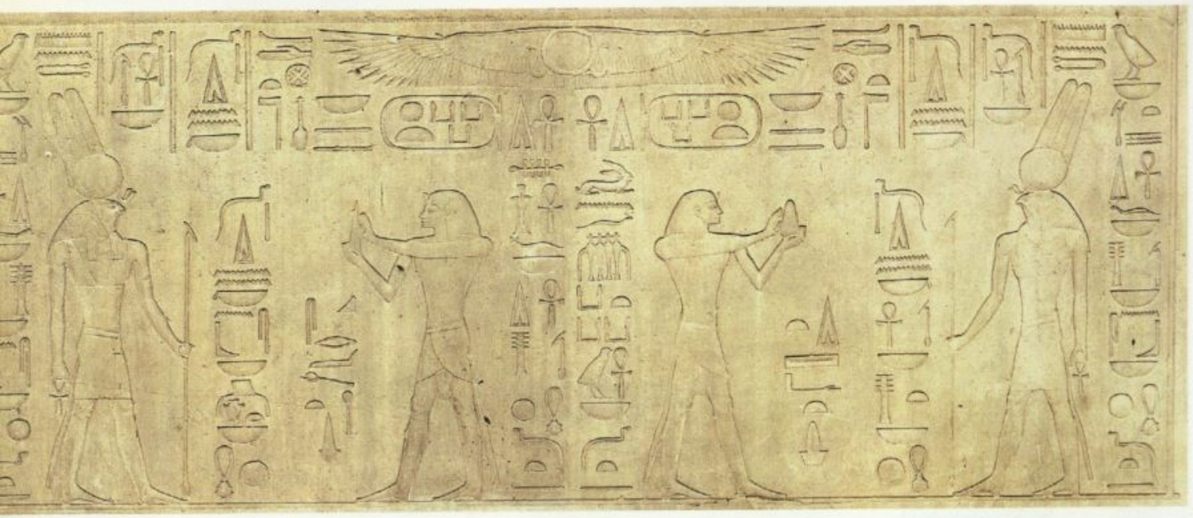
The kings of the late Twelfth Dynasty spread their cult and building programs far beyond the borders of Egypt. They commissioned

61 (opposite) The "White Chapel" of Sesostris I
Karnak, Open-air Museum; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1925 BC; limestone; surface area: 6.54 x 6.45 m.
The way station of Sesostris I known as the "White Chapel" is considered a treasure of ancient Egyptian architecture and relief sculpture. Two ramps lead up to a pillared structure raised on a platform. A balustrade and architrave topped by a cavetto cornice and torus moulding and roof enclose the room. The original site of the chapel is disputed, though it might have stood in the axis of the Amun temple.

temples in Amara and Semna in Nubia, and also in Serabit el-Khadim in Sinai. In Egypt proper, numerous statues and stelae were consecrated, and temples extended or rebuilt. Amenemhat III paid special attention to the Faiyum and constructed numerous complexes there.

One of these is the cult site of Biyahmu with two 18-m-high colossal statues (now destroyed) of the deified king. In Medinet Madi he consecrated a small temple to the crocodile god Sobek and the goddess Renenutet, and in old Shedit, modern Medinet el-Faiyum, he remodeled the Sobek temple. A series of statues showing the king in extremely unusual vestments or as a sphinx with an enormous lion's mane surely also came from there.

Certainly, the few Middle Kingdom temples that still exist show heterogeneous basic structures, but included in almost every case are a sanctuary tract with cult image chambers, an offering table hall, and a visitation hall along with a court area. Each of these temples must be understood as an independent, powerfully evocative complex. Landscape and architecture, surface images and inscriptions, statues and obelisks form a conceptual whole in which gods and kings play their parts.



62 Lintel: Sesostris III brings offerings before Montu
Medamud, temple of Montu; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1860 BC; limestone; H. 107 cm, L. 225 cm; Paris, Musée du Louvre, E 13983.
Montu, god of war and of the province of Thebes since ancient times, was highly regarded among the rulers of the Middle Kingdom. His most important cult site was in Medamud. Sesostris III completely rebuilt and considerably expanded the temple there. The lintel, now in the Louvre, comes from this complex. It derives from a passage that led to a room for the storage and preparation of offerings. An inscription on both sides of the passage, which also reports that Sesostris III erected the gate "for his father Montu … of fine, white limestone", refers to this function. The picture field of the lintel is divided into two parts whose compositions mirror each other. Each of the halves shows Sesostris II presenting offerings to Montu. The figures of the king with their offerings face outward from inside the room and are protected by the winged sun disk, symbol of the heavenly deity of Edfu. To the right, the king hands the god Montu a conical *shat* cake and, to the left, a conical loaf of white bread. In both cases Sesostris III wears a royal headdress and a kilt with bull's tail; the falcon-headed Montu wears a god's kilt and a tall feathered crown with a sun disk and double uraeus cobras. The god holds a *was* scepter and an ankh, symbols of life and prosperity.

63 Sphinx of Sesostris III
Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1860 BC; anorthosite; H. 42.5 cm, L. 75.5 cm; New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.9.2.
This powerfully expressive sphinx is characterized by an apparent contrast between the deeply lined, gaunt features of an aging Sesostris III and the muscular massiveness of the lion's body. Yet both elements equally communicate a great sense of self-assurance, and the head raised high emphasizes the alert tension of the body, creating a harmonious whole.

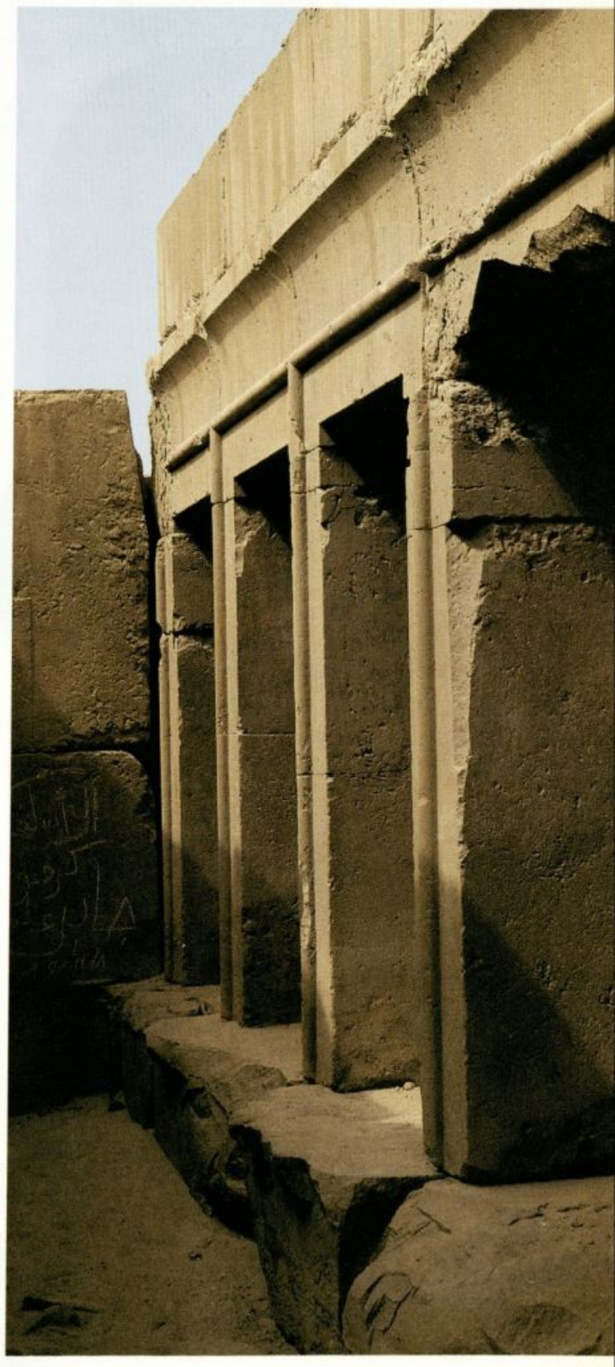
Living Images – The Statue Programs of the Temples

A divine sculptural image in the round worshipped by the cult was an essential part of every temple in ancient Egypt. These cult images have almost all been lost since they were completely or partially made of precious metals and were therefore stolen and melted down. Two-dimensional images on temple walls show that for the most part the statues must have been standing or enthroned figures. They were believed to be living images and thus elements of the divine being, which is why only the king or a priest acting on the king's behalf were permitted to approach them. Outside the sanctuary too were figures of gods fashioned primarily of stone and approachable by initiated individuals such as priests and leading administrators. Only the barque with the processional statue was on display for the entire population during large festivals.

The Multifunctional Nature of Royal Sculpture

Statues of kings were indispensable components of every temple to the gods; they were also believed to be alive. Since their exact provenance can be reconstructed in only a very few cases, we must surmise their function on the basis of their appearance. The statue type plays an important role here, suggesting various functional levels. Royal statues can take on an active as well as a passive role. As supreme lords of the cult, they move before the gods, for example, in the form of offerings or praying figures who kneel or stride forward. As embodiments of divine and royal power, they demonstrate the guarantee of creation through the king, such as in the form of sphinxes. They are worshipped and provided for by humans as the cult focus, shown as either standing or enthroned figures. They enjoy the protection and acknowledgment of the gods as chosen individuals. We find them in statue groups, for example, in which king and god touch each other. Iconographic elements identify the depicted individual as well and emphasize his function, such as the unusual attire of the so-called priest figure of Amenemhat III or the ankh symbols held by the pillar statues of Sesostris I. As a third and definitive element, the body and facial features play a central role in determining the expressive effect of the figure. Analagous to the king's titulary, each and every ruler established his own formal criteria that still allowed for functional and stylistic variations. If we observe the development in royal portraits of the Eleventh and Twelfth Dynasties, significant differences become apparent: concentrated mass and powerful weight for Mentuhotep II, formulaic symmetry for Sesostris I, taut intensity for Amenemhat II, great concentration and force of will for Sesostris III, and energetic severity for Amenemhat III.

In principle the appearance thus leads from great formalism and a "hieroglyphic" composition of details over a balanced aesthetic to psychologizing naturalism.



64 Temple of Qasr el-Sagha
Qasr el-Sagha; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1880 BC; limestone; W 21 m, D. 7.80 m.
One of the few Middle Kingdom temple complexes still well-preserved today was created during the late Twelfth Dynasty on the west bank of the Qarun Lake in the Faiyum oasis. It consists of seven adjacent cult image chambers and a common offering table room. Forecourts or halls are absent, as are an enclosure wall and the entire image and text decoration. Consequently the temple must have remained incomplete and was probably never used for cult rituals.

65 (below) Bust of Amenemhat III
Probably Faiyum, Sobek temple; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1810 BC; copper alloy with remains of inlays of gold, silver, electrum, and rock-crystal; H. 46.9 cm; private collection, Switzerland.
Royal metal statues are attested since the Old Kingdom (such as the over-life-sized statue of Pepi I from Heliopolis), and were part of the temple statue programs. Very few of them have been preserved, however, since most were stolen and melted down. This piece is without a doubt a masterpiece of the metalworker's art. It remains unclear whether the figure was once standing or enthroned, since the lower body was produced separately and has yet to be found. The large headdress was attached separately; the headband, which ensured a harmonious transition to the forehead, is missing. The face betrays great expressive power. The form of the face, the energetic thrust of the jaw, the dominant chin and naturalistic eyebrows are elements known from other portraits of Amenemhat III. The extremely large mouth, the wide set of the small eyes, prominent, long nose, and the very reserved modeling of muscles and wrinkles depart from the typical image of the king, however. One might ask, therefore, if a separate portrait was developed for royal metal statues, or if the bust must be dated somewhat later and was perhaps created for Amenemhat IV.

66 (above) "Priest figure" of Amenemhat III
Medinet el-Faiyum, Sobek temple; Twelfth Dynasty, ca. 1830 BC; granodiorite; H. 100 cm; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 20001.
The bust of the "priest figure" of Amenemhat III belonged to an over-life-sized statue of the king. It was found at Shedit, the primary cult site of the crocodile god Sobek in the Faiyum. The costume of the figure is unique. The ruler wears a heavy, braided wig, the animal skin, and a heavy chain around his neck. The ceremonial beard, which was held by extremely wide chin straps, and the cobra over his forehead have been broken off. To the right and left of the wig, the king holds two narrow divine staves with falcon heads. Thus the prototype was created for the royal staff bearer, a statue type that only reappeared late during the New Kingdom. The identification of the figure is unquestionably Amenemhat III, due to the characteristic facial features. The statue's function is disputed, but the unusual attire and the animal skin, however, refer to a particular cult ritual so that the designation "priest figure" is certainly acceptable.

67 Squatting figure of Sesostris-senebefni
Probably Memphis; Twelfth Dynasty, reign of Amenemhat III, ca. 1830 BC; sandstone, H. 68.3 cm; New York, The Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 39.602.
Squatting figures with the legs drawn in to the body and arms crossed over them occur for the first time during the Middle Kingdom. They stood in tombs in connection with a cult path, or in temples. The body position is meant to demonstrate unambiguously the privilege of participation in the cult for a king or god and the provisions required for it. Sesostris-senebefni includes his wife in this privilege. The god appealed to in the offering formula is Ptah-Sokar, lord of the necropolis of Memphis.

68 Statue of Sobekemsaf
Probably Armant; Thirteenth Dynasty, ca. 1700 BC; granodiorite; H. 150 cm; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, ÄS 5051/5801; base slab with feet; Dublin, National Museum of Ireland, 1889.503.
The standing-striding figure of the Theban governor Sobekemsaf probably once stood in the Montu temple in Armant since the offering formula addresses "Montu of Thebes, resident of Armant." The considerable corpulence of the man's body, the unusual size of the statue for a private sculpture of the Middle Kingdom, and the kilt of honor, which juts out strongly and is pulled high over the chest, manifest the importance of this high official whose sister was an important royal wife of the Thirteenth Dynasty.

Private Temple Sculpture – The Chosen Observer

While both divine and royal sculpture was directly involved in the magical safeguarding of the cults, the statues of other persons bore a completely different significance. During the Old Kingdom, statues of private individuals who were neither kings nor gods were most likely placed along the paths of cults and processions. Since the Middle Kingdom at the latest, such figures could also be seen in the temples themselves. They represent individuals who did not actively partake in the cult, but who enjoyed the privilege of being present and "observing" the rituals. They were thus involved in the temple's redistributive system. The inscriptions on the figures also suggest their association as participants in cult ritual, since they contain for the most part formulas invoking participation in the provision of offerings for the divinity. Many of these statues show a squatting position with the legs folded under the body, or the knees held up and pressed close to the body. Such a squatting pose suggests a passive position of repose and is suitable for neither the gods nor the king. In order to guarantee the permanence of this participation in the cult and the resulting provision in an enduring manner, both in this life and the next, a new iconographic element is added: a cloak wrapped tightly around the body. Combined with the crossed arms and partially covered hands, it suggests the aspect of Osiris. During the late Middle Kingdom, standing figures were also added. Their arms hang close to the body and their hands are either at their sides or extended in the front along the kilt.

The individuals represented are high-ranking priests or officials who also in reality were directly involved in the cult. With this development the Egyptian temple during the Middle Kingdom opened itself to non-royal persons in two phases. As "observers," they were granted access to the temple and later, as worshippers, were even allowed to participate in the rituals of the cult.